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COMMONWEAL

The consistent ethic after Webster
JOSEPH L. BERNARDIN

EDUCATION ISSUE

'BEGGARS' CAN'T BE CHOOSERS
Raymond A. Schroth

CHARLES L. GLENN
on privatization & educational choice

TOM O'BRIEN
on higher education in America

JAMES P. DEGNAN
on the corruption of college football

FRANCES FITZGERALD
on the struggle for America's soul

J. PAUL MARTIN
on parish catechetics

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CORRESPONDENCE

Effects of welfare

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: I have never seen any reliable evidence of a "corrosive effect of the social-democratic welfare state, whose very benefits, when 'delivered' to atomized individuals, obviate the need for family, church, trade union, community...." and am curious where Wallace Katz ["The Flawed Triumph of Social Democracy," February 9] finds such evidence.

Conversely, there's a good deal of historical and other evidence that poverty is responsible for the kinds of effects Katz blames on the welfare state, for when people are involved in a battle for survival, it loosens their "sense of responsibility for and to each other," and also "breeds individual narcissism and callousness." The breakdown of families because of poverty is older than those dark satanic mills for which Mr. Katz feels nostalgia. Even George Gilder and his right-wing ilk wouldn't go *that* far.

HERBERT J. GANS

Money, power, jobs

Taylor, Pa.

To the Editors: It's hard to disagree with Wallace Katz's characterization of the contemporary American as being consumed with the "pleasures of consumption." However, Mr. Katz weakens his observation by assuming that it's simply a matter of our consumerist passion that has rendered Americans devoid of interest in the political process.

If such experienced political commentators ventured into small-town America and observed local government at work, they might observe the tri-axis of money-power-jobs dictating political docility among citizens. A word of protest might cost one a job, not just a V.C.R.

Perhaps understanding a small town's mores illuminates what's happening in Washington, D.C., and perhaps Prague.

CHARLES J. ORLOSKI, JR.

Converging themes

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: I would like to congratulate Wallace Katz for the three political projects for the future that he has defined ["The Flawed Triumph of Social Democracy," February 9]. On these three points, social democrats are clearly converging upon the main themes of "neoconservatives," as those of us are called who are in favor of democratic capitalism. Indeed, an emphasis upon mediating structures and the cultural dimensions of economic development; upon the moral and cultural responsibilities of business corporations; and upon local institutions, including local public-private partnerships, have been staples of neoconservative thought for many years: in Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus, Irving Kristol, Robert Nisbet, and Charles Murray ("the little platoons" of *In Pursuit of Happiness*).

In these matters, ideological labels are likely to matter less in the future than the convergence upon substantive issues; no doubt, many crosscurrents of practical disagreement will remain.

I think, e.g., that Mr. Katz underestimates the extent to which Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan have become the models of most of Europe's social democrats, including Soares in Portugal, Gonzales in Spain, a great many of the leading thinkers of France (who now speak derisively of socialism and enthusiastically of liberalism), and certainly of the Poles, Czechoslovaks, and Hungarians. During the past ten years, nearly all social democratic regimes have cut tax rates, denationalized industries, stressed privatization, emphasized innovation and enterprise, and begun to discipline their welfare programs because of cost and unexpected outcomes.

This does not make social democracy cease being social democracy; but it does bring it closer to the democratic capitalist model. At the same time, Reagan and Thatcher have redefined conservatism to include a (disciplined) welfare state. The old models of socialism pure and simple, and "liberal capitalism" pure and simple, have been rejected as models.

In this new environment, it is not easy to distinguish social democracy from democratic capitalism in their structures, although their emphases no doubt differ—the one inclining more toward "equality," the other more toward "freedom" and "invention."

In this respect, the record of Europe's social democracies in generating new jobs during the 1980s was far inferior to that of our own democratic capitalist society—a matter of concern to Europeans. Also a matter of concern to Europeans is the fact that Europe has fallen behind both the United States and now Japan as the originator of new technologies. These are crucial weaknesses in the social democratic model, and account for efforts to make it more competitive by democratic capitalist standards.

Two further points. I can't think of a single neoconservative who accepts the Fukuyama thesis. Secondly, although Katz speaks of "Czechoslovakia's Civic Forum," Civic Forum is the specifically Czech institution in Prague; its cousin, People Against Violence (*Verejnost Proti*

(Continued on page 268)

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COMMONWEAL 65

CONTENTS

Volume CXVII, Number 8

Correspondence	234
Editorials	235
What killed Robbie?: *Jane Hussain*	238
School in the marketplace: *Paul Baumann*	239
Leaves of the artichoke: *John Garvey*	240
The consistent ethic after 'Webster': *Joseph L. Bernardin*	242
'Beggars' can't be choosers: *Raymond A. Schroth*	249
Marie-Dominique Chenu: *Joseph A. Komonchak*	252
Easter bunnies and Xmas trees: *J. Paul Martin*	255
Media: *Frank McConnell*	256
Screen: *Paul Baumann*	257
Stage: *Gerald Weales*	259

BOOKS

Privatization and Educational Choice: *Charles L. Glenn*	260
Killing the Spirit: *Tom O'Brien*	261
The Hundred Yard Lie: *James P. Degnan*	263
The Struggle for America's Soul: *Frances FitzGerald*	264
Self-Portrait of the Other/My House Is on Fire: *Saul Maloff*	266

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A call for reflection

Call for Action, the Chicago-based remnant of the 1976 "Call to Action," has issued a "Call for Reform in the Catholic Church." Having collected 4,505 signatures on its petition, it nailed its "ninety-five theses" to the cathedral door of American culture—the *New York Times* [February 28]. The group hopes to acquire 100,000 signatures endorsing "fundamental renewal of the church." The petition was widely circulated—this office received a dozen copies in the months preceding. Presumably there were many, like us, who did not sign up. Does that represent a fundamental disagreement with the proposed reforms? Or is something else at issue?

Essentially the petition calls for a more democratic, egalitarian, and inclusive church: the inclusion of women at all ministerial and administrative levels, the end of mandatory celibacy, consultation with lay people on the church's teachings on human sexuality, greater say by the local church in the selection of bishops, widespread consultation on parish and church closings. The Call for Reform also asks for more expeditious attention to enculturation, mechanisms for financial accountability, and unity among the Christian churches.

Some have objected that since these changes are highly unlikely to be achieved under the current papacy, campaigning for them will only breed disappointment. To this the sponsors reply, with an eye toward Eastern Europe, that the world is full of surprises and that the Call for Reform encourages already disappointed Catholics to share their hopes rather than drift into apathy and disaffection if not outright disaffiliation. On this point, we are with the sponsors.

Another objection is that the petition is too "churchy." The petition opens with a catalogue of the world's ills—poverty, environmental dangers, international conflict, drug abuse, technological dilemmas. It goes on to argue that so long as the church's own unjust structures and practices are in place, it is crippled in addressing these ills. To which others have replied that an imperfect church nowise prevents Catholics from striving to remedy the world's injustices and that thinking it does distracts energies, especially lay energies, from pressing and plausible tasks.

This is an old debate. In fact the American bishops' original "Call to Action" began in 1976 as a bicentennial project primarily focused on change in society, only to end (and founder) with a major focus on change in the church.

It is true that around the world the church corporately and Catholics individually have been peacemakers and advocates of the poor, notwithstanding a wide variety of internal church attitudes and structures. When the full story of the liberation of Central Europe is told, the role of both believers and religious institutions—though largely untouched by the reforms of Vatican II—will be recognized as having been critical to change and to nonviolence.

Nonetheless, even when these efforts were not preceded by reforms in the church,

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they have usually been accompanied or followed by demands for them. Although the principles appropriate to a just organization of secular life cannot be applied unmodified to the church—indeed, cannot be applied uniformly throughout all of secular life either—the church simply cannot preach one message for the rest of society and a sharply contrasting one for itself. The papacy cannot bless historical change, human rights, the benefits of participation and loyal opposition outside the church doors, then dismiss them as inconsequential or inapplicable within. Practice what you preach and preach by your practice are the inevitable demands of a world suspicious, for good reasons and bad, of preachers. Double standards swiftly self-destruct.

The Call for Reform may exaggerate the interconnectedness between internal change and external effectiveness but it is not wrong to highlight the link.

Having rejected the first objection and reached a split decision on the second, why not rally to the Call for Reform? Virtually every one of its proposals has been advocated at some time or another in these pages. Most of them have been endorsed by us editorially, and since they are unlikely to be implemented soon, we expect to support them again. What led us to hesitate in this case?

Perhaps it is the presentation of these reforms not on their individual merits but together as a platform for renewal. A recipe can be a disaster if it lacks crucial ingredients, no matter how tasty and nutritious the other elements. The Call for Reform appears to lack several crucial ingredients.

One is a sense of boundaries. The petition's concern for inclusiveness, justified in many ways, is not completed by any corresponding concern for a distinct Catholic identity. Its well-intentioned but almost promiscuous suggestion that there are no substantial issues dividing the various branches of Christianity is revealing. No body, from the early church on, has been able to say clearly what it is without a willingness to say what it is not.

A second missing ingredient is a sense of the sacred. It is not difficult to see how this element was lost in a document focused on organizational structures. But the thrust of the petition is essentially ethical—toward renovating the church so that it can effectively perform good works. There is very little about faith or worship, mystery, sacrament, or salvation.

"I'll have to go now. The saints are marching in."

Both these lacunae could be seen in the way the petition treated the church's crucial task of passing the faith on to future generations. Young people, it declared, are "reluctant to affiliate with a church they view as authoritarian and hypocritical." No doubt that is a problem. But more and more it strikes us that woeful ignorance of theology, liturgy, spirituality, and the church's moral heritage is the greater problem. Nothing in this petition addresses that, nor does it speak to the possibility that young people will not be drawn to a church that doesn't offer them something they won't find by supporting Friends of the Earth, Oxfam, or Amnesty International, becoming Peace Corps volunteers, or joining community organizations. Without reasons to love and treasure the church, younger generations will take little interest in reforming it.

Finally—and here we tread uncertainly—the Call for Reform forces us to ask ourselves whether the liberal-conservative axis that has set the post-Vatican II agenda (of which this petition is mostly a reflection of the liberal end—though conservatives might voice agreement with some of its points) is not wobbling out of orbit. In our view the reforms of Vatican II are far from having been fully implemented, and no one knows that better than the generations of Catholics who grew up in the pre-Vatican II church and invested so much in the spirit and work fostered by John XXIII. This petition reflects the experience of those generations, reflects it in what is missing as well as in what is stated. Boundaries, identity, sense of the sacred—these were so deeply inculcated into those pre-Vatican II Catholics that they are likely to take them for granted, while chafing at the rigidity of the way these realities were formerly presented.

But increasingly those who grew up after Vatican II form the body of the church. Is it time we recognize that what could be taken for granted in a platform for church renewal two decades ago cannot be taken for granted today? Yes, there are old concerns still to be pursued, and no less valid because they are old. But the universe has cranked around a full quarter century since the council and posed new problems that cannot be examined honestly within the limits of the liberal-conservative polarity.

The poignancy of the Call for Reform—but also, we are sorry to say, its serious weakness—arises not because it is radical but because it is so terribly familiar.

THE PASSION OF TEACHERS

Like death and taxes, school reform is always with us. In the last five years, talk about the relative ignorance of American schoolchildren and the declining status and competitiveness of the U.S. worldwide have sparked a national reform movement. Public funding for education has increased, and in many states teacher salaries have risen dramatically. Few immediate improvements in the quality of instruction or the performance of students are evident, however. Is more fundamental change needed?

"We're presiding over a catastrophe here," John Taylor Gatto, New York City Teacher of the Year, told us recently, and we're

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inclined to agree. Gatto teaches at a junior high school on the edge of Harlem. He's been at it for twenty-five years, and his criticism of the system is unsparing. Compulsory public schooling, initially modeled after the nineteenth-century factory system, is oppressive and inordinately wasteful, he believes. School children have been artificially segregated from the larger community, and from the kind of real-life experiences in which one learns to accept responsibility and from which one earns self-respect. Furthermore, as the influence of television grows and the stability of the family erodes, that isolation has become more debilitating.

The school day's ever-changing rotation of classes and the curriculum's proliferation of disciplines fragment children's experience and frustrate the learning process. The alienation fostered by these "endless doses of low-level abstraction," as Gatto calls them, is compounded by the system's reliance on standardized testing.

Gatto's own solutions to the impasse emphasize student initiative, structural flexibility, and real-life tests and tasks. "When children are given whole lives instead of age-graded ones in cellblocks," Gatto notes, "they learn to read, write, and do arithmetic with ease if those things make sense in the kind of life that unfolds around them."

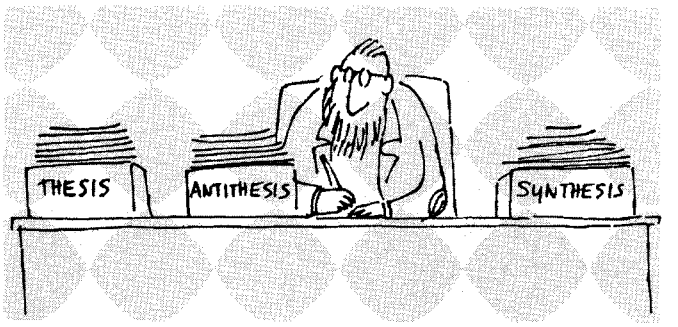
Such a vision reminds us of the late Bruno Bettelheim's defense of fairy tales and his attack on utilitarian reading materials in *The Uses of Enchantment* (Random House). "The acquisition of skills, including the ability to read," Bettelheim wrote, "becomes devalued when what one has learned to read adds nothing of importance to one's life."

We are beset by such de-valuing. Gatto's response is to put children back in contact with the working life of the community. He advocates one-day apprenticeships, in which students "shadow" the daily routine of an adult. In the past, his students have visited with police officers, newspaper reporters, and trucking company executives. Independent study also works. Once students are provided with models and know they will be held accountable, the freedom to pursue projects in their own way can be intoxicating.

Mandatory community service is another element in Gatto's ideal curriculum. Service agencies, such as soup kitchens, the humane society, and groups working with the blind, have benefited from the involvement and energy of his students. And Gatto is a strong advocate of parent-teacher cooperatives, in which children, parents, and teachers jointly tackle such things as gardening and parks projects, as well as museums and more academic chores.

Ultimately, Gatto believes, the task of education is to create "arrangements that work to place the child alone in an unguided setting with a problem to solve." Teachers should be resources and coaches, not prison guards. Where possible, adventure and excitement should be encouraged. One of Gatto's former students, a young teenager, took a bicycle trip across the country. Such unorthodox tests develop self-reliance and confidence. Self-knowledge and self-education are the most efficient and effective tools in learning, Gatto insists.

This philosophy is roughly congruent with that of other reformers who are calling for a move away from the standard "super-



market" curriculum. Interdisciplinary approaches to the basic intellectual skills of analyzing and computing, observing and hypothesizing, are being developed. Theodore Sizer (*Horace's Compromise*, Houghton Mifflin), former headmaster at Phillips Academy, argues that only simple structures will be flexible enough to reach the students now being lost. Sizer's "Coalition of Essential Schools" is involved with Central Park East Secondary School in East Harlem. Community service, parental involvement, and individual pacing are all part of the school's curriculum. Its interdisciplinary offerings—one class on math and science in the morning, another on the humanities in the afternoon—reflect Sizer's emphasis on a mastery of a limited number of basic skills and areas of knowledge.

How will the success or failure of such alternative methods be measured? Many educators contend that abstract measurements of ability, such as the IQ and Scholastic Aptitude Tests, are unreliable and destructive. Gatto thinks it is time to return to the tradition of performance-based testing, or specific task evaluations, and Sizer also is in favor of such "exhibitions of mastery."

Such preferences for narrower measures of competence dovetail nicely with James Fallows's criticism of the American reliance on standardized tests. One of the reasons for Japanese economic and cultural prowess, Fallows wrote in *More Like Us* (Houghton Mifflin), is not that Japan's best and brightest are better and brighter than ours, but that Japan's bottom 50 percent are. Fallows attributed this to the Japanese cultural regard for effort and participation. In Japan, a sense of inclusion and a relatively secure status are accorded all hard-working students. Our superstitious and socially divisive regard for test scores has created a meritocracy with little room or respect for the necessary contributions of those Americans who are not now succeeding in school.

The passion of teachers like Gatto is invigorating. Yet it is hard to imagine how his proposals might be implemented on a large scale. Furthermore, his suggestions place too little emphasis on communicating a civic and cultural tradition. Self-knowledge and individual initiative are indispensable in education, but a curriculum that revolves around the mercurial interests of students is likely to lack substance, and would place unusual demands on teachers. Yes, good teachers must draw students out, but as Chesterton remarked about education, some things—English and algebra, for example—need to be put in as well.

Still, any student would be lucky to have a teacher like Gatto. His commitment to ideas and concern for children are irrepressible, and his exhortation to make the world that unfolds around

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our children a greater part of our daily lives needs a wider hearing. Maybe that is what a "return to standards" and "back to basics" is really all about.

REPORT FROM HARLEM

WHAT KILLED ROBBIE?

NOTES ON A NATIVE SON

At 10:30 P.M. on February 2 in Harlem, a young black male with a gun ran toward a policeman. He ignored an order to drop the gun and the policeman fired. Robert Cole died on the sidewalk, a thirteen-year-old boy with a broken, unloaded gun in his hand and thirty-one crack vials in his pockets.

I first met Robbie in the summer of 1986. He was a student at the Children's Storefront (where I was a teacher), a round-faced, cheerful, inquisitive child of ten. I remember how he once tried to listen to friends' hearts with a stethoscope.

I last talked with Robbie eight months ago. I was walking along 129th Street on a hot summer day when he caught up with me on his bicycle, delivering a message from his mother about travel arrangements. Parents and teachers at the Children's Storefront had wanted to get the young teenagers out of Harlem for the summer, and we were hoping to enroll them in schools outside the city in the fall. Robbie was going to visit relatives in Alabama for the summer, while his older brother, Elika, was going to Chicago. Since my daughter, Amina, was also going to Chicago to visit my parents, she and Elika would take the bus together and look after each other. Elika returned to New York with us in August. Unfortunately, Robbie came back as well. I would catch an occasional glimpse of them both. Only later did I hear that Robbie had changed.

It was dusk when I walked a group of students home from the funeral parlor. We zigzagged our way back and forth across streets guided by their sense of which side was less dangerous. Last year, Robbie and his friends used to hang out after school on the Storefront's wooden porches. I was often the last person to leave. I liked to hear their laughing and roughhousing outside as I prepared the next day's lessons. When I locked up and we said goodby, the boys seemed to take that as their cue to leave too. I was grateful for their presence; 129th Street is not the friendliest place at dusk.

Robbie, a young black male growing up in Harlem, never had a choice between being one of the frighteners and one of the frightened. He was both. How he would learn to deal with the corrosive humiliation of always walking in fear, the sinister exhilaration of momentarily inspiring fear, the rage of shame when his bluff was called—that was all still in the works when he died, a broken, unloaded gun in his hand, the victim of his own bravado.

Harlem did not invent machismo, nor did America. But wimps are not welcome here. The American male dares to pursue an impossible dream. How many killings do American children watch each week, long before they are able to distinguish between live and recorded footage, between documentary and drama? The average American boy grows up playing with toy guns and violence-centered computer games—the more realistic the better. The day before his death, Robbie told his young girlfriend that he was going to "stop playing with guns."

Robbie was shot because he did not look like the average American child. He looked like a black male in a dangerous neighborhood with a gun. Some of the mothers suggested that Robbie, like other teenagers they had known, had run toward that policeman, gun in hand, in an act of semisuicidal self-destruction. I prefer to see it as an angry, childish, macho act, not a despairing one. But with the other mothers, I see self-hatred and despair in some of the children at the Storefront. We don't need to read Franz Fanon to learn about the self-hating despair of the wretched of the earth.

But there is also a great resiliency in Harlem: amazing human spirit, people picking themselves up time and time again, promising themselves and each other to get their act together, to shape up and fly straight; people taking homeless individuals off the street and settling them into their own cramped, heatless apartments; people marketing homemade food and crafts, wild and woolly ideas, art and music. Churches, community projects, soup kitchens, political campaigns.

Harlem, even more than the rest of New York City, is a distillation of the best and worst in American life: a high concentration of degraded and brutalized people and a high concentration of heroic spirits. It also has lots of ordinary people, like Robbie and his family. Like most Americans they live in a world of billboards, store windows, and TV commercials, a world of layaway plans, extended credit, and ads that promise *rewards, privileges, success*. Cruel words. Cruel to many of us, but more cruel to poor blacks living in Harlem.

Like all of us, Robbie wanted to be successful and admired. Like all of our children, he knew that success in America is measured by wealth and power. And on 129th Street today, wealth and power translate into drug money and guns.

Anger, impatience, and hostility to authority are familiar symptoms to teachers and parents of adolescent children. Last year, the Children's Storefront tried to grapple with twelve-year-old Robbie's behavior problems. Having attended perhaps thousands of parent-teacher conferences, on both sides of the table, I know there are no simple solutions, especially for a child like Robbie. How much of Robbie's anger was typical teenage defiance, and how much of it was his growing awareness of all the counts he had against him? How best to channel that anger?

In the days between Robbie's death and his funeral, I avoided the news reporters and the cameramen who roamed the neighborhood asking questions. I avoided them because I had no easy answers, because I was upset and angry.

"You want to know *what killed Robbie*?" I felt like shouting at the reporters. "He died in pursuit of the American Dream. He died for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, with hap-

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piness understood as money, liberty as free enterprise, and life as something to be spent accumulating status symbols or to be thrown away in defense of one's macho image. And now, although he couldn't make his fortune, you're giving him his fifteen minutes of fame: 'Third Teen Slain by Cops in One Week.'"

We sit back smugly, watching the socialist world crumble, assured by our leaders that its failures lay in underreliance on market mechanisms and personal incentives. We christen greed as profit motive and entrepreneurial spirit, and presume that these are prerequisites for democracy, freedom, prosperity. We quarrel about such matters as deregulation, welfare, public schools, and whether to legalize drugs. Will we ever have the courage of the Eastern-bloc peoples to recognize that much more than reform is needed? They have realized that a system which enshrines social responsibility without individual freedom is basically flawed. When will we understand that a system that enshrines personal freedom without social responsibility is equally flawed?

The people at the Children's Storefront will go on trying to open up for their 100 students all the sacredness and infinite possibilites of life, liberty, and happiness. They are the sort to light one candle rather than sit and curse the darkness. In memory of Robbie Cole, I curse the Darkness.

JANE HUSSAIN

Jane Hussain, a former teacher at the Children's Storefront, is writing a series of books for children.

REPORT FROM CHICAGO

SCHOOL IN THE MARKETPLACE

THE FUTURE OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION?

Be careful how you use the "Y" word around Sister Mary Ellen Caron.

"If you visit us, you'll know we're not," Sister Caron said when asked if Old St. Patrick's School was a haven for yuppies. "We want to serve the poor. We want to serve the middle class."

Old St. Patrick's School, located just west of Chicago's downtown "Loop," opened in the fall of 1989. It is the first new Catholic school to open in Chicago in twenty years. Sister Caron is the principal.

"It happened because a group of parents talked to the pastor," she said. "I can't keep up with the registration for next year."

It also happened because young professional people finished getting M.B.A.s and started begetting children. Many want to remain in the city, and are looking for a Catholic alternative to public and private schools. Others, including single mothers, are faced with commuting to the city and are reluctant to leave their children forty or fifty miles and over an hour away during the day. Instead, they are bringing their children into the city with them.

"All the children who are commuting are returning," Sister Caron said. "One parent and child come all the way from Barrington, which is a one-hour drive. It gives her an extra two hours a day with her child."

Old St. Patrick's currently is housed in Presidential Towers, a commercial and residential building complex. Thirty-five students are enrolled in the preschool and kindergarten programs. Next year, when restoration of the first two floors of the Old St. Patrick's School is completed, 130 students will be enrolled. Kindergarten, and first- and second-grade classes will be conducted in the renovated school building, while the preschool program will continue to use the room at Presidential Towers. Restoration of the four-story school is expected to be completed in August 1992. Eventually the school will run through the eighth grade. Day care before and after school also is provided.

"We call it the 'School in the midst of the marketplace,'" Sister Caron said. "We're in the middle of downtown."

Tuition is $3,000, with financial aid available to those who qualify. Unlike the traditional financing of parochial schools, Old St. Patrick's takes no money from either the parish or the archdiocese.

"They're with us as long as we don't cost them anything," Sister Caron said laughing about the support received from the archdiocese. "They can't afford it. I really think we're going to be a model for them."

As in cities across the country, Catholic schools are closing all over Chicago. Financially, the archdiocese and local parishes can no longer afford to subsidize the usually low tuition fees Catholic schools charge. Sister Caron said it was a sad situation, but that Old St. Patrick's might help to point the way to a new future for Catholic schools.

The school is essentially independent from the parish, and local business leaders sit on its board of directors. To a certain extent, Old St. Patrick's is modeled on other urban private schools, many of which ironically sprang up in abandoned Catholic school buildings. Tuition will be relatively high but class size small, and the board will see to it that the budget is balanced.

"I really think this is the way to go," Sister Caron said.

Keeping costs down will not be easy, however. Currently, 30 percent of the students are on financial aid. But at $3,000 the tuition is still only half the average at most private schools.

"We don't want to get that high. We don't want just the rich and the poor. We're trying to do something different," Sister Caron said. "But the price will continue to have to pay the cost."

Academically and culturally, Old St. Patrick's also eschews the traditional isolation of Catholic parochial schools. "We say we're built on the Judeo-Christian tradition," Sister Caron said. "We're ecumenical. We teach Catholic religion, Catholic morality...but we bring in everyone else's beliefs as well."

Several Jewish students have enrolled for next fall. Religious diversity, Sister Caron admitted, can bring conflict or a dilution of content. "But I'd rather be in that struggle than do it the old way. This is the way the world is."

A strong ethical focus will distinguish Old St. Patrick's from other schools. "It's value-driven," she said. "That starts at three years old."

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Sister Caron came to Old St. Patrick's from the St. Thomas More School on Chicago's West Side. At More, where she was principal for five years, she also supervised the renovation of a school building as well as the reinvigoration of the school's mission. Initially called in as a consultant, Sister Caron eventually was asked to take over this experiment in the "midst" of the market place.

"For the time being we're the only ones out there," she said of the school's unorthodox mixture of financial independence and Catholic identity. "It's pretty exciting."

PAUL BAUMANN

Paul Baumann is an associate editor of Commonweal.

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

LEAVES OF THE ARTICHOKE

THE MARRIAGE OF RELIGION & CULTURE

"The African churches were never allowed to be themselves, neither in the early church in Numidia, Ethiopia, and Nubia, nor in our own day..." (Joseph G. Donders, review of *African Catholicism*, by Adrian Hastings, in *Commonweal*, February 9, 1990).

When I read the sentence above it set off a train of thought that took me far from any consideration of the book under review. My first reaction was sympathy: Christianity has too long been associated with Western culture, in a limited and limiting way. But then I wondered whether the sentence was quite right. Anyone who sees Ethiopian Christian icons knows that they are not Egyptian or Greek or Serbian; they are uniquely themselves, and can't be mistaken for anything other than Ethiopian art. That they have been influenced by non-Ethiopian iconography is also undeniable, and probably unavoidable. That thought—the unavoidable influence of outside cultures—raised some questions, important ones. I think they are often answered too glibly because they are potentially divisive and uncomfortable.

If a culture and a people—Judaism and the Jews—were chosen to be God's way of communicating with the human race, to what extent can we speak of allowing another culture to receive that message, and at the same time be "fully itself"? If it is to appropriate the message, won't it take on at least a part of the other culture? Surely the Hellenized gentiles who first embraced Christianity, whatever their nations of origin, were Judaized to some extent. There were disputes between early Christians concerning the extent to which gentile Christians should be expected to observe Jewish law; but an element of Judaism survived in even the most stripped-down vision of Christianity.

For example, to what extent can it be argued that the Ten Commandments are "universal," beyond any cultural boundaries, unless we first accept a God who is not (as one version of Hinduism would have it) beyond good and evil, but makes demands of us—in other words, unless we accept a very Judaic God? Can a culture which did not accept this, accept it, and still be "fully itself"? Doesn't a Hindu have to leave behind something uniquely Hindu and take on something Jewish to embrace a belief in such a God?

Can a message be extracted from one culture, leaving the inessential cultural accretions behind, and offered to another culture in its purity? This would require the strange belief that we can know things without culture or language, or that we have the ability to see clearly what is a cultural encrustation, and what is "essential"—but this latter is likely to be what seems important to us because of our own cultural assumptions.

Important theological and pastoral issues rise from these questions. To what extent has any culture or belief been purely and simply itself? Many of Judaism's central stories and theological concepts came from other cultures and religions. The idea of a general judgment comes from Zoroastrianism, as do angels and demons. The story of Noah is Babylonian in its origin. Is it possible to keep only the Jewish "spin" here, the basic point, and do away with angels, demons, judgment, the story of Noah? I am not sure that the extraction of the essence of a teaching is so simple. The alternative and, on the surface, more traditional approach—keep the teachings as they are—raises the possibility, uncomfortable to some traditionalists, that the Holy Spirit has been at work in other religious traditions, since in believing in angels, demons, and a general judgment we have accepted something from those traditions, however much our manner of accepting has made what we have accepted our own.

The belief that when we peel away cultural encrustations we will arrive at the essence of a tradition or a culture assumes that whatever was there at the beginning was pure, and all later additions or amendments are corrupting, or are sidetracks. It could well be that if we peeled away everything added to Judaism over the course of its history we would find, at base, a polytheistic religion which practiced human sacrifice. (Elohim, one word for Lord, is a plural form in Hebrew; and at one level the story of Abraham is a warning against human sacrifice, a warning that would not have to be delivered if the people being addressed weren't tempted to it.) To paraphrase a metaphor Wittgenstein used in another context: we may peel away the leaves to try to get at the essence of the artichoke, and find that the leaves were what the artichoke was about.

The Nicene Creed is itself the product of the confluence of several things: Christian revelation, the Judaic heritage of Christianity, and Greek philosophy. Is it an unfair imposition of an alien culture on another culture to insist that the Creed is important to any definition of Christianity?

Finally, I have some discomfort with any claim made for cultural singularity or purity. The claim to purity doesn't need to reach

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Nazi proportions or be about anything threatening. It's just that the "we alone can understand this" mentality has covered a multitude of sins and sloppy sentiments. We have special reason to fear it now.

We have seen, for example, what some forms of American religion have been like when left free to be fully themselves, unmoored in any larger or deeper tradition. The assumption that God's ways can be almost equated with the free market is a part of Pat Robertson's message. The identification of the interests of America with the divine will—America as the new Israel—has long been a feature of popular American religion.

This, however, is not presently as dangerous as what may be stirring itself awake in Eastern Europe, where Catholic Christianity has been identified with being Polish and Croatian, and Orthodox Christianity with being Russian and Serbian. Up to a point this is not only a good thing, but the culture is hallowed by its association with the church. However, Polish anti-Semitism (not entirely a thing of the past, as the controversy over the convent at Auschwitz revealed) and Russian anti-Semitism (alive and as sick as ever in Pamyat) have too often been justified by appeals to Christianity—not only to the ugly picture of the Jew as Christ-killer, but also the Jew as outsider, non-Russian, non-Polish, "cosmopolitan," the importer of outside influences that corrupt the purity of the native Polish, or Russian, soul. This could be seen in part as the desire to see Polish and Russian Christianity be "fully themselves"—that is to say, uncorrupted by outside influences.

I have attended liturgies in three kinds of Orthodox parish. In the first kind, Orthodoxy is so intertwined with (for example) being Greek that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other, and passionate defenses of Greek language and culture are equated with the survival of Orthodoxy itself. In the second, ethnic traditions are a presence, one in which the people take pride, but they are clearly distinguished from the religious dimension. In the third, the ethnic dimension is absent; the parishes are simply Orthodox Christian churches. What interests me is the number of people, especially younger people, who tend to move from the first sort of parish to the second or the third. This may be one gift pluralism has given to religion: it enables us to make distinctions that are more difficult in homogeneous cultures, where separating religion from ethnicity and nationhood might be more difficult.

The idea that a culture or religion is ever purely itself contains an obvious danger. There is no doubt that we lose something wonderful when ethnic and cultural heritage is forgotten. I have gone to Ireland at every available opportunity, love Irish music, and wish Gaelic were an easier language to master. Several Greek churches I have attended have hosted celebrations, after weddings and baptisms, that would be so much less if they were less Greek. When this quite appropriate love becomes mixed with an inappropriate notion of purity—of the pure Russian soul, or uncontaminated African Christianity—it misses an obvious historical truth. The purity is, and always was, mythical, and dangerous. We have seen what Europe did to colonial countries when it considered itself to be the bearer of Christianity in its pure form, and what evils have been done when America saw itself as the new Israel and the enlightener of other nations.

I want to make it clear that this is not a disagreement with the reviewer whose work set off a series of questions. Certainly Christianity in Africa should not be an imitation of Western Christianity, and Africa has contributed, and is contributing, to the fullness of Christianity, just as the other cultures which met Christianity have made their contributions. The notion of national or cultural purity, however, is insidious, and inaccurate as well. The social reasons which should lead us to be wary are obvious. The theological implications are profound. There are limits to how inclusive a tradition can be as it grows; but inclusiveness, and the changes that accompany it, are undeniable. They are a challenge to those fundamentalists who believe that the early church was the purest church; to those traditionalists who believe that the influence of other cultures was acceptable, just as long as it stopped years before they were born; and to those liberals who believe that we can determine, from within our own culturally limited set of assumptions, what really matters in our tradition, and what does not. □

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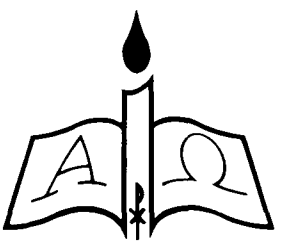

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THE CONSISTENT ETHIC AFTER 'WEBSTER'

OPPORTUNITIES & DANGERS

JOSEPH L. BERNARDIN

The title contains two themes which I will not treat equally. On the one hand, it calls for assessment of the status and role of the consistent ethic of life. On the other, it focuses the discussion on one issue in the ethic, abortion, in light of the Supreme Court's decision of last July. I will explore the second topic at greater length, but in the context of the consistent ethic.

Specifically, I plan to (1) review the consistent ethic of life since 1983, (2) examine the abortion issue since *Webster*, and (3) close with a perspective on the future of the consistent ethic.

The consistent ethic since 1983

The idea of the consistent ethic grew from a conviction I developed as chairman of both the committee which prepared *The Challenge of Peace* and the Committee on Prolife Activities. These two distinct efforts seemed to share a common goal. It struck me that the age-old task of the church, to protect and promote human life as a gift and trust from God, faced in our time a series of threats and challenges of a different magnitude than the past. The new challenge was a product of "the signs of the times" in the sense that technological change, growing global interdependence, and the complexity of an advanced industrial society brought together several new challenges to life and some very old ones in one large problematic. I thought it would be useful to begin a discussion about the utility of relating problems without submerging one into another. How does the experience look after seven years? I will comment briefly on selected moral issues: where we stand, and what needs to be done.

The nuclear threat The danger of nuclear war, perhaps more than any other single issue, symbolizes the new character of threats to life in the twentieth century. In the words of McGeorge Bundy's recent history, the cold war has been played out between "danger and survival." Since political change was judged impossible, the best to be hoped for was strategic stability. In the pastoral letter on war and peace, our hope was for a mix of arms control measures and modest political changes to transform gradually the world we have known for almost fifty years. However, the last two years have produced anything but modest change. Today, the possibility exists to reshape the U.S.-Soviet relationship in a fashion which would dramatically transform the nuclear relationship. There are still fifty thousand nuclear weapons to be reduced, and a consistent ethic should contribute to the changing political and strategic drama we are experiencing. But the hope of the pastoral letter, radical reduction in the danger we have known and the possibility of a different political order in world affairs, is closer at hand than I would have ever guessed in 1983.

Capital punishment The consistent ethic's opposition to capital punishment is rooted in the conviction that an atmosphere of respect for life must pervade a society, and resort to capital punishment does not enhance this attitude. In contrast to the nuclear question, a brief report on this topic must be starkly negative. The number of men and women condemned to die grows each year; the general public does not share the conviction of the consistent ethic on capital punishment; and we have recently had the spectacle of people running for public office on the basis of whom they are prepared to kill.

Even though the Catholic tradition, in principle, allows states to resort to capital punishment, and in spite of the public consensus which presently exists, I am convinced that a consistent ethic cannot change on this question. But we must be prepared for a long, strenuous effort with no solid hope for early progress.

Euthanasia Complementing a willingness to kill criminals to solve crime is the call to legalize euthanasia in our society. By no means do I wish to collapse these two different questions. I only want to point toward a troubling attitude which seems to hold that killing—whether done in an official act or even from a humanitarian motive—only affects the victim. A consistent

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ethic points out how killing can erode our societal reverence for human life, our bonds of trust, and our respect for one another. A society which is willing to make killing a normal solution for life's problems misunderstands its corrosive effect. Euthanasia may well be the abortion debate of the 1990s, dividing us again as a people over how life in its vulnerability is to be cared for. In 1983, euthanasia was a passing reference in the list of threats to life. It will be more central, I fear, in our future.

Social and economic justice The consistent ethic joined the task of protecting life to that of promoting life. If life is to be respected in a society as a whole, it must be protected in its most vulnerable members. Centuries ago, the prophets taught Israel that the quality of its faith could be tested by how the widows and orphans were treated. These were the inhabitants on the edge of the circle of life in Israel. Jesus specified the message more dramatically. Those at the edge of the circle—the vulnerable and the broken—were very special to God, he said, and indeed, God was found among them in a particular way.

Almost two millennia later, the prophetic message about the widows and orphans sounds starkly contemporary in our society. Today, women and children remain the most vulnerable members of U.S. society. Their lives reflect the persistent social problems of our society: health care, housing, and hunger. We have had a decade of remarkable economic growth, but the prophets would show us where to look, lest we be mesmerized by the illusion that everyone has shared equally in that growth. The consistent ethic of the 1990s will be tested by how the orphans and widows fare.

Abortion since 'Webster'

Having looked at a number of questions which the consistent ethic addressed, I turn now to the abortion issue as it stands after the Supreme Court decision *Webster* v. *Reproductive Health Services* in July 1989. To evaluate the status of the abortion question since *Webster*, it is useful to look quickly at the larger picture of abortion since *Roe* v. *Wade* and *Doe* v. *Bolton* in 1973. Two characteristics stand out: the radical nature of the original decisions, and their divisive impact on our national life.

By the radical character of the 1973 decisions, I mean their profoundly damaging consequences for life and law in U.S. society; these were captured well by two legal scholars, John Noonan in 1973 and Mary Ann Glendon in 1989. Within weeks of the Court's decision, Noonan concisely summarized its impact. Examining how the Court, in its two sweeping decisions, had changed the prevailing consensus of both state law and recent public referenda, Noonan concluded: "By virtue of its opinions, human life has less protection in the United States today than at any time since the inception of the country. By virtue of its opinions, human life has less protection in the United States han in any country of the Western world." His judgment, that the results of the *Roe* and *Doe* decisions would isolate the United States in the way it addresses abortion, has now been confirmed in the detailed study of Professor Glendon, *Abortion and Divorce in Western Law* (Harvard). In an article written just prior to *Webster* in 1989, Professor Glendon observed that "no country in Europe has gone so far as our Supreme Court in permitting abortion on demand."

The radical character of the decision assured a profound and powerful social response. The response has taken shape in the emergence of a national grassroots prolife/anti-abortion movement, committed to reversing *Roe* and *Doe*; it was born in the 1970s and has sustained the witness for life until today.

Also emergent in the 1970s was a prochoice/pro-abortion constituency committed to maintaining U.S. law in the position of providing no effective protection to unborn life. The intensity of the public debate, the passions aroused, the positions taken, and the persistence of views cannot be understood without focusing squarely on the underlying issue. As Noonan observed in 1973, *Roe* and *Doe* were analogous to the Dred Scott decision. The aftermath of *Roe* and *Scott* in the Court's history forced this nation to debate and decide who was to be counted as legally protected and fully human.

In the nineteenth century, the debate centered on black slaves; in the twentieth century, on unborn life of every color and nationality. It is hard to conceive of a more fundamental challenge to the moral vision and character of a society: deciding who fits in the circle of the legally protected human community. If we cannot answer that question accurately, with clarity, compassion, and conviction, how can we hope to keep our moral integrity as a people and a nation?

The consistent ethic—both pre- and post-*Webster*—is helpful in that it illustrates the consequences of a range of issues when we fail as a society to protect the sacredness of every human life. A moral vision which does not have room in the circle of the human community for unborn children will inevitably draw the circle of life too narrowly in other decisions of social and economic policy.

Noonan and Glendon have illustrated how we failed in the 1970s to understand the humanity of life at its inception. Others in the 1980s—from the Congressional Budget Office to *America* and *Commonweal*—have documented how we have failed to protect children in terms of infant mortality, health care, nutrition, and housing. The combined judgment of the last twenty years is that both our constitutional policy on abortion and our social policies for women, children, and families have failed to meet minimum standards of justice. There must be a connection—logical, legal, and social—between our lack of moral vision in protecting unborn children and our lack of social vision in the provision of basic necessities for women and children.

The consistent ethic of life seeks to protect and enhance human life from conception to natural death. It is precisely in light of this larger perspective that I find unacceptable the contention that our society has given a responsible answer to the tragedy of abortion in the constitutional regime established by *Roe* and *Doe*. The view that *Roe* is satisfactory contends that its answer has a traditional American character to it: it protects freedom

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of choice. But this view reduces the compelling moral question—how do we recognize the human among us?—to a procedural problem. The *Roe* rationale asks, "Who decides?" but it does not focus on "What is being decided?" By ignoring the second question, it evades and eviscerates the heart of the moral challenge posed by abortion: not only who is human, but how do we respond to the human when it is vulnerable and voiceless?

As a bishop and a citizen, I cannot passively accept a definition of the fundamental human, moral, and social question posed by abortion which is cast in purely procedural terms. I find myself responding here as I have when the threat posed by the nuclear arms race is discussed solely in terms of the technical characteristics of missiles and warheads, with the human reality suppressed and ignored. The abortion question must be addressed within the church and society in terms of its full human substance. There is more to this question than the mere phrase "freedom to choose" can capture. The substance of the issue must be argued at the moral, legal, and political levels.

The post-*Webster* period gives our society the opportunity to do precisely this. *Webster's* significance is not that it reversed *Roe*, but that it returns the democratic process to the fifty states and gives them the opportunity to redress the faulty logic of *Roe*. It allows the public debate to focus on what is being decided in an atmosphere dominated by the question, who decides.

For the church and for the consistent ethic, there are both opportunities and dangers in this post-*Webster* era.

We have the opportunity—by our witness, advocacy, persuasion, and arguments—to make a positive contribution to the national debate on abortion. We hope we can help our society turn away from abortion and save the lives of millions of our unborn sisters and brothers. We have the opportunity to be a consistent and constant defender of human life and dignity, a teacher of the truth that every life is precious—no matter how young or old, how rich or poor, no matter what race or sex or status in society.

But there is also the danger that we could make the mistake of some of the pro-abortion groups and narrow our public concern to a single issue, ignoring other threats to human life. There is the danger we might become increasingly shrill or strident, forgetting the importance of civility and charity in public discourse. There is the temptation simply to proclaim positions, forgetting that, in a pluralistic society, we must persuade, build coalitions, and reach out to shape public opinion to support human life. And there is the temptation to lose hope, to give up, to turn away in frustration, apathy, or discouragement.

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I have been disappointed in the public dialogue since *Webster* because so much attention has been focused on protest and power, and so little on what is at stake substantively for our society. The basic question is the kind of society we want to be—one that destroys its unborn children, or one that commits itself to a decent life for the most vulnerable in our midst, especially women and children. This fundamental question must be addressed morally, legally, and politically.

At the moral level, the first challenge of the post-*Webster* period is to redress the consequences of *Roe's* definition of the abortion issue. Redress means lifting up for evaluation the forgotten factor in *Roe*, the moral meaning of unborn life; in technical terms, the moral status of fetal life. This implies asking what moral claims the unborn child has on us. The claims cannot simply be on the mother of the unborn child, but on society as well. Catholic teaching has always seen in the abortion decision a personal and a social choice. The damage done in abortion is not simply to the unborn child, but also to the society which permits, sustains, or encourages abortion. Raising up the forgotten factor of *Roe* means reexamining publicly why life, which is demonstrably human in its genetic character and development, can be denied all legal protection for six months and any effective legal protection until birth.

The challenge for the consistent ethic in the post-*Webster* period is to make an effective case in our society for Pope John Paul II's assertion that the right to life is the fundamental human right. A consistent ethic will ask, What happens to other rights in a society when protection of the right to life is selective? What happens to our moral imagination and social vision if the right to life is not protected for those who do not look fully human at the beginning or end of life? What happens to the vulnerable along the full spectrum of life, if the right to life is denied to inherently vulnerable and dependent unborn life?

Precisely because of this forgotten factor in *Roe*'s definition of the abortion issue, a consistent ethic must assert with moral creativity and courage Vatican II's statement that "from the moment of conception life must be guarded with the greatest care."

It is my conviction that the strength of the Catholic moral tradition, its persistent defense of unborn life, responds directly to the needs of the post-*Webster* moment—redressing the exclusion of concern for the unborn in *Roe*. But I also want to face directly the critique which contends that, in our emphasis on the forgotten factor of *Roe*, we have ignored the problems faced by women.

Those who espouse a prolife, consistent ethic—whether they

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be bishops or laity, authors or activists—need to address this critique very carefully. Our necessary—indeed, essential—public witness in providing a place in the public debate for the moral claims of unborn children can lead to a failure to address the situations faced by pregnant women. We can fail to consider the circumstances of conception—that it can be the result of coercion, ignorance, or abuse. We can seem to be unaware that women who want to bear their children are without the social and economic resources needed to sustain new life. We can appear to ignore the fact that pregnancy for some women is at least partly the experience of being left alone with the consequences of immoral, irresponsible male behavior—at the point of conception and afterwards. These issues, the circumstances surrounding conception, and the resources needed to sustain a pregnancy and support children, are also part of the moral fabric of the abortion debate.

A prolife, consistent ethic acknowledges the human and moral significance of these questions. It must respond to them at the levels of both moral analysis and social support. At the moral level, we should stress that the key to sound moral analysis is how the several moral elements of a complex situation are ranked and related to a decision. To acknowledge the moral weight of the circumstances of conception, and the challenge of sustaining a pregnancy, does not mean one has to accept the direct killing of innocent life as a solution. A consistent ethic challenges this conclusion and indicts it for its failure of social vision and moral courage.

The indictment is not directed in the first instance to the woman caught in these circumstances, but to a social policy and vision fostered since *Roe*, which presents abortion as the normal, natural response to the circumstances I have described. The consistent ethic must stand morally and socially against such a response. We should be second to none in our sensitivity to the problems pregnant women face. But we should offer a different moral response for individuals and society at large. Basing our position on Vatican II's judgment that abortion is an "unspeakable crime," we must combine moral wisdom with specific social policies of health care, housing, nutrition, and counseling programs in our own institutions. We must also support public programs which provide an alternative to the hard and narrow choices pregnant women often face.

But a moral position alone is inadequate for the post-*Webster* period. The essential challenge we face is that unborn life is deprived of even minimal legal protection. Another key post-*Webster* question is: By what civil law shall our society be guided?

I have argued earlier that Catholic teaching sees in abortion a double moral failure: a human life is taken, and a society allows or supports the killing. Both concerns, protecting life and protecting the society from the consequences of destroying lives, require attention. Both fall within the scope of civil law. Civil law, of course, is not coextensive with the moral law which is broader in its scope and concerns. But the two should not be separated; the civil law should be rooted in the moral law even if it should not try to translate all moral prohibitions and prescriptions into civil statutes.

When should the civil law incorporate key moral concerns? When the issue at stake poses a threat to the public order of society. But at the very heart of public order is the protection of human life and basic human rights. A society which fails in either or both of these functions is rightfully judged morally defective.

Neither the right to life nor other human rights can be protected in society without the civil law. To hold the moral position of the Catholic church—that all directly intended abortion is morally wrong—and not to relate this moral position to civil law would be a grave abdication of moral responsibility. Precisely in a pluralistic society, where moral views differ, protection of fundamental rights is directly dependent upon the content of the civil law. In our society we cannot depend on moral agreement alone; the fact of our pluralism means that the content of civil law, what binds us all on essential social questions, is a major public concern.

But does this imply that we are imposing our religious beliefs on society as a whole? No, for two reasons. First, in making the case for a reversal of *Roe* and a legal order which protects the unborn, we present our views in terms of the dignity and equality of human life, the bond between human dignity and human rights, and the conviction that the right to life is the fundamental human right. Second, our objective, that the civil law recognize a basic obligation to protect human life, especially the lives of those vulnerable to attack or mistreatment, is not new in our society. The credibility of civil law has always been tested by the range of rights it defends, and the scope of the community it protects. To return to the analogy of civil rights: The struggle of the 1960s was precisely about extending the protection of the law to those unjustly deprived of protection. The people of the United States did not need a religious consensus to agree on this proposition then; they do not need religious agreement today to understand the argument that a part of the human community is without fundamental protection of the law.

The extent or kind of legal protection that can be achieved for unborn children is partly dependent on the degree of public consensus which can be built to sustain a legal norm. Since civil law does not incorporate the moral law in toto, to build such a consensus, a convincing case must be made that abortion is a public order issue.

Prolife constituencies, including the Catholic bishops, but not limited to them, have pursued two approaches to the civil law. At the constitutional level, for example, the bishops have supported and continue to pursue a constitutional amendment which would protect the life of the unborn child. This is a response as fundamental and as far-reaching in scope as the *Roe* decision was. While the effort continues, there is much work to be done in terms of public opinion. A second approach has been to seek limits on abortions, even with *Roe* in place. Obviously, the *Webster* decision offers a new range of possibilities at the state level for this strategy. Moreover, there are solid public opinion grounds for pursuing a regime of limitation on abortions.

This pursuit, however, moves the abortion debate from the

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moral and legal levels to the political. New questions arise for the church at this level: Should the consistent ethic be pursued in the political process—in the world of party platforms, campaigns, specific legislation, and an examination of the positions of public officials and candidates for public office?

There are two reasons why the church—keeping within proper theological and constitutional bounds—should engage the issues of the consistent ethic in the political process. First, using the abortion question, the democratic process is the arena where we may be able to close the gap between the consequences of the *Roe* decision and the consistently expressed views of U.S. citizens. In polling data, it is clear that the regime of permissive abortion established by *Roe* and expanded by later Court decisions does not reflect a consensus in the public. While public views on abortion are often described as ambiguous, the ambiguity does not diminish the dissatisfaction with 1.5 million abortions a year. Let me simply summarize the data:

- In Connecticut Mutual Life's extensive survey of American values in the 1980s, 65 percent of U.S. citizens considered abortion morally wrong. Particularly significant was the finding that women, racial minorities, and the poor opposed abortion more strongly than 65 percent.
- In a *Newsweek*/Gallup poll last fall, 88 percent of U.S. citizens favored informed consent for women seeking abortions; 75 percent favored parental notification for teenagers; 61 percent favored prohibitions on public funding of abortions except in life-threatening circumstances.
- In the *New York Times* a month after *Webster*, 71 percent favored parental consent laws and 60 percent favored testing for fetal viability.

In a debate as complex and emotional as abortion, statistics can be used and abused. I wish only to make a basic point: The status quo of permissive abortion does not fit the moral or legal convictions of a large majority of U.S. citizens. They may not be where the Catholic bishops are, but neither are they where *Roe* and *Doe* left us.

Webster offers an opportunity to use the democratic process to translate a significant consensus on key limits to abortion into law. To grasp the opportunity of a post-*Webster* period, we need to join firm convictions about what is right and wrong at the moral level with a capacity to build a consensus at the legal level that will significantly reduce the number of abortions. We should join others—believers and humanists, Christians and Jews—who share the view that 1.5 million abortions a year is unacceptable for even one more year.

I am convinced that a potential exists which has not yet been grasped; the potential lies in the 60 percent of Americans who do not identify themselves completely with either of the major voices in the abortion debate. Without forsaking our moral principles, we should seek to address this constituency in a way that invites them to join us in setting significant limits on abortion. To do so will require clarity of moral vision on our part; it will also demand a capacity for creative choices to build consensus at the level of law and policy. It will also require that we raise the quality of the public debate on abortion from rhetoric to rational dialogue even as we seek to reduce the quantity of abortions performed.

The second reason the church should pursue the consistent ethic in the political process is that religious institutions in a democracy stand at the intersection of public opinion and public policy decisions. In a complex democracy like ours, public opinion seldom translates directly into policy decisions. But it does set a framework for policy decisions. It sets limits for policy choices and provides indications of policies desired by the public.

The church influences this intersection of opinion and policy through its access to the conscience of citizens. In the first instance, this will be the conscience of Catholics, but the U.S. bishops' pastoral letters showed that it is possible to gain a hearing beyond the confines of the church.

Within the church, teaching on moral and social policy is addressed to the community as believers and as citizens. Within the community, some citizens will carry specific professional or vocational responsibilities on certain issues. When we wrote the pastoral letter on peace, we addressed it to the citizens of a nuclear nation, but we were conscious of the specific responsibilities and choices faced by Catholics in the military. When we wrote the letter on the economy, we held special meetings with labor and business leaders. On health care issues, physicians, nurses, and administrators have unique choices to face, and special witness to offer.

Finally, there is the position of Catholics holding public office. In a sense, all of the above issues and more are encompassed in the decisions public officials must make. As you know, the question of [Catholic] political leaders and the abortion question was included in a resolution from the General Meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops last November. My purpose a moment ago was simply to put it in the context of professional choices made by others in the church. Now I will apply it to Catholic political leaders, offering here my personal interpretation of these issues.

The relevant text from the bishops reads: "At this particular time, abortion has become the fundamental human rights issue for all men and women of good will .... No Catholic can responsibly take a 'prochoice' stand when the 'choice' in question involves the taking of innocent human life." I wish to make ten points on this sensitive issue.

1. Note that the bishops' text is addressed to all Catholics, not only to political leaders.

2. Its basic purpose is to state clearly the church's objective moral teaching. Because all directly intended abortions are judged immoral in Catholic teaching, a prochoice public policy—which, in effect, is pro-abortion—collides directly with this moral teaching. In this specific judgment of moral and legal precepts, the bishops could hardly have stated their principles any differently.

3. While public officials are bound to fulfill their offices in light of a given constitutional framework, they obviously have some room for specific choices within that framework and can choose to emphasize some issues over others.

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4. In accord with the bishops' statement, I am firmly committed to the position that public officials who recognize the evil of abortion have a responsibility to limit its extent, to work for its prevention, and to protect unborn life.

5. I am also firmly convinced that all Catholics are bound by the moral principle prohibiting directly intended abortion. However, many Catholics, politicians and ordinary citizens, will disagree on strategies of implementation to lessen and prevent abortions. At the level of strategy and tactics, we bishops should express views as we did in the pastoral letters. By definition, these views are open to debate.

6. The relationship of moral principle, civil law, and public policy is complex. We should encourage and foster an ongoing conversation within the church about strategies to address abortion.

7. While public consensus is needed to support law, consensus must be created by many voices, including public officials who can try to move the public toward a better moral consensus. Neither church leaders nor politicians should simply wait for consensus to form.

8. The position of a public figure who is personally opposed to abortion, but not publicly opposed in terms of any specific choices, is an unacceptable fulfillment of a public role. I do not pretend to know in every circumstance which tactics such a figure should use, but moral consistency requires that personal conviction be translated into some public actions in order to validate the personal view. Sometimes public officials may be faced with a dilemma, for example, when they must decide whether to support a law which may not be in total accord with their moral convictions, but would nonetheless decrease the number of abortions. In such a situation, they must ultimately decide which is the better course of action.

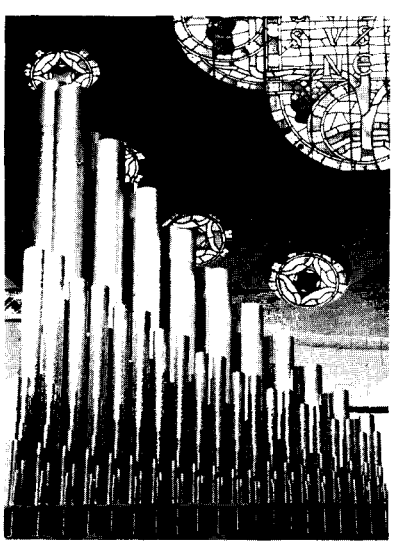
9. I have always believed dialogue with public officials—Catholics and others—is an essential part of the church's social ministry. Moreover, all public officials should be held accountable for their positions. Indeed, there are times when criticism is called for. It is important, however, that we continue to engage them and not cut them off.

10. The church's teaching authority is ultimately a moral authority, a wisdom to be shared with all its members. I believe that the church can be most effective in the public debate on abortion through moral persuasion, not punitive measures.

The future of the consistent ethic

I return now—all too briefly because of the length of my presentation—to the consistent ethic. In assessing its future role, I will speak to questions of both substance and style.

In terms of substance, I remain convinced after seven years of experience that its original premise remains valid. It was proposed to help and urge the church to keep our moral



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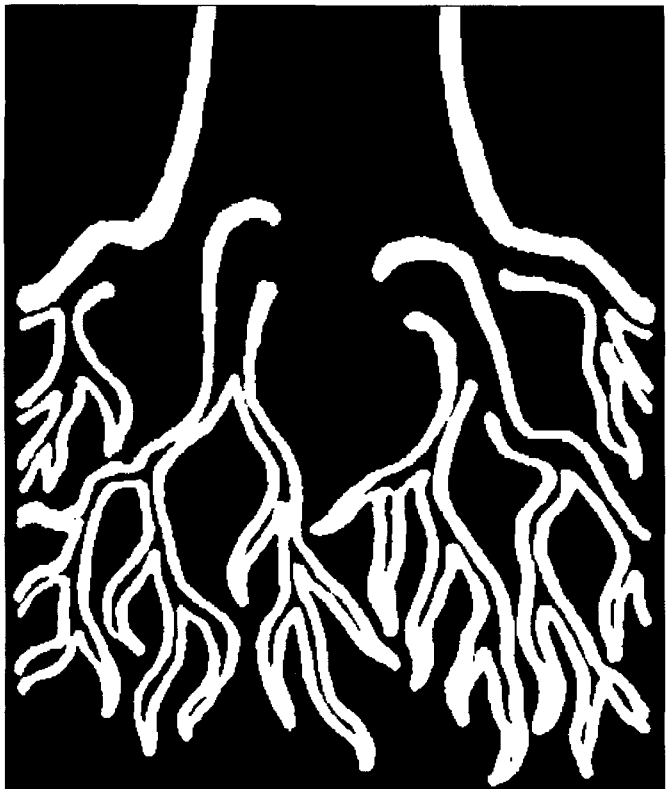

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perspective broadly designed, to address issues on their intrinsic merits, but also to recognize that the life issues today are not confined to one area of human activity. It was also designed to draw upon the systematic resources of the Catholic moral tradition. We are not a single-issue tradition or a single-issue church; we enhance our treatment of each issue by illustrating its relationship to others.

This general conviction, that the substance of the consistent ethic complements both the signs of our times and the strength of the Catholic tradition, is reinforced by the topic I have addressed at length this evening. In the polarized setting of the abortion debate, it is still possible to locate the majority of Americans as the broad middle, generally opposed to abortion on demand, but ambiguous about how many restrictions to place upon it. Neither the prolife nor the prochoice position has moved this middle toward a viable political and civil consensus.

To convince this 60 percent of the populace of the wisdom of at least limiting abortion would be a major advance for life. I am convinced that moving the middle depends upon projecting a broad-based vision which seeks to support and sustain life. It will not be enough to be against abortion; we need to show convincingly that we are for life—life for women and children; for life, in support of the very old and the very young; for life, which enhances the chance for the next generation to come to adulthood well-educated, well-nourished, and well-founded in a value structure which provides a defense against the allure of drugs, violence, and despair.

I believe that the work of the Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, and the many other initiatives we sponsor around the country give us a start, an opportunity to project this vision persuasively. The consistent ethic gives us a way both to propose the vision and to pursue it.

The substance of the consistent ethic yields a style of teaching it and witnessing to it. The style should be prophetic, but not sectarian. The word "prophetic" should be used sparingly and carefully, but a truly consistent ethic of word and deed, which protects life and promotes it, is truly a work of God, hence a prophetic word in our time. Such a vision and posture inevitably will meet resistance. But we should resist the sectarian tendency to retreat into a closed circle, convinced of our truth and the impossibility of sharing it with others. To be both prophetic and public, a countersign to much of the culture, but also a light and leaven for all of it, is the delicate balance to which we are called.

The style should be persuasive, not preachy. We should use the model of the Second Vatican Council's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*: We should be convinced that we have much to learn from the world and much to teach it. We should be confident but collegial with others who seek similar goals but may differ on means and methods. A confident church will speak its mind, seek as a community to live its convictions, but leave space for others to speak to us, help us to grow from their perspective, and to collaborate with them. May my words this evening contribute to this confidence. ☐

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'BEGGARS' CAN'T BE CHOOSERS

RACE AT LOYOLA, NEW ORLEANS

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

My New Orleans re-education in racial relations began four years ago in one of my writing classes. We had been reading James Baldwin and Alice Walker with the hope—my hope—that, in response to these writers, my students, all of whom were white, would come away with at least a vicarious notion of what and how black people had suffered.

Then one replied that he belonged to a fraternity called the Beggars. He knew the policy wasn't right, he said, but: "We never had a black member and we never will. That's our tradition."

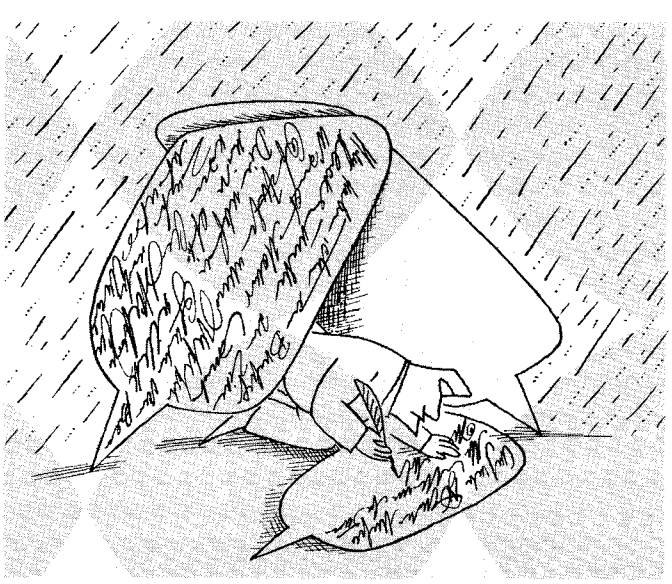
Like most white liberals, over the past forty years I have gone through a series of both intellectual and emotional states on the issue of race. When I grew up in Trenton, New Jersey, in the 1930s and 1940s—where Baldwin, in *Notes of a Native Son*, threw a pitcher of water at a waitress who refused to serve him—blacks were cordoned off in Lincoln High School and relegated to the balcony of the Lincoln Theater, and I remember a race riot breaking out after the Trenton High vs. Trenton Catholic football game and seeing a black boy on the ground and a white boy kicking him. But our parents—my father an editorial writer for the *Trenton Times* and my mother a teacher—had taught my brother and me that the word "nigger" was a despicable term and raised us to abhor prejudice and segregation in any form.

I recalled the post-game riot in Trenton during the 1967 Detroit riots when, as a young priest, I witnessed policemen roar into an intersection, leap out of their cars and pound a black man to the ground for the crime of standing on a street corner in his own neighborhood; and in 1968, in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination, when I stood on the balcony of our Georgetown dorm and watched Washington burn.

In the twenty years since then, again like most white liberals, my feelings on race have become more complex—moving back and forth on the continuum between a romantic conviction that blacks are somehow superior persons because of what they have suffered, to, at the other extreme, the frustration I have felt as an academic dean and professor at several colleges with what seems the paranoia, self-pity, and self-destructive tendencies of black students who fail to study hard enough to whip the odds stacked against them—who are, in effect, as irresponsible and shiftless as whites. I have also been struck by the essays of the black professor Shelby Steele, in *Harper's* (February 1989) and the *American Scholar* (Autumn 1989), who regrets the black students' unconscious need to exaggerate campus racism and withdraw into a black "theme house" or black student union rather than compete academically and struggle for a truly integrated society.

Meanwhile, mirroring a larger American society in which the whole concept of broad racial integration has become a lost ideal, the campuses have witnessed a resurgence of racial incidents—many in the context of fraternity rites and pranks.

At first glance, set in the national context, Loyola has no racial "crisis." Eleven percent of the students and about 4 percent of the faculty are black. Unlike the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, we have had no riots; and, unlike the University of Wisconsin, Madison, none of our fraternities has held a "slave auction" at a pledge party. Unlike our next-door neighbor, Tulane, our frats have not had two cross burnings this academic year.



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Unlike "Old Miss," our frats did not dump two white students, bound and naked, with KKK and racial slurs painted on their chests, on a small black campus in Mississippi.

Although the Beggars and the three "white" sororities at Loyola have traditionally not had black members, the other two fraternities have had a total of four; and blacks have been student government presidents. But an observant visitor would perceive, in effect, an informally segregated campus—whites, Hispanics, and blacks separated by color, language, and culture, gravitating into increasingly isolated groups. On November 29, 1988, a white female wrote in her diary, later published in the 1989 yearbook: "Sometimes, I really wish there would be a race riot on this campus. Blacks against whites; with people beating on each other, fists flying, blood coming from noses and lips. A riot where they might have to call the police to break it up, people might have to be hospitalized, and TV cameras might be pushed into people's faces. Maybe then people would realize there really is a problem."

At this stage of my education, perhaps I should not have been shocked to find a segregated fraternity in the South—even in 1986. But this was at a Catholic and Jesuit institution, and Jesuit schools, especially this one, had, over the last decade, drawn up goal statements committing themselves to social and racial justice. My first reaction was to question the student's story; but I asked about and discovered that I was the only one on campus not to know the Beggars' reputation: famed partly for their abusive hazing practices (some of which may have been exaggerated by legend), regarded as brawlers—either in rough and tumble intramural games or in a Saturday night barroom fracas—suckled by a local alumnus, they see themselves as an "Old New Orleans" frat, founded with a Jesuit mentor in 1921 and tied to Southern traditions. Indeed, their constitution, *as late as 1981*, limited their membership to white, Christian males.

As individuals, they often contradict the negative image of the group; they are endearing, amiable, sincere. And those who wish them well but lament the history that seems to hold them captive have wondered whether there was some way to break through. One Beggar alumnus from over forty years ago explained that the whole glue of the group has always been the illusory, unexamined conviction that they were an "elite," a superior breed of New Orleanian—even though the only evidence of their "superiority" seemed to be their fervid devotion to themselves. The tragedy, he added, is that there have always been Jesuit mentors who bought into the system.

In spring 1987, the campus newspaper, the *Maroon*, launched an investigation into the activities of the fraternity. In a series of articles and columns which later won an Associated College Press Leadership Award from the *Los Angeles Times*, the paper documented, through interviews with unnamed ex-Beggars pledges who feared reprisals and with blacks who had suffered their abuse, the frat's pattern of racism.

The campus reaction was neither surprise nor outrage: some assailed the messenger, the *Maroon*, for bringing the bad news; individual Beggars who did not consider themselves racists and who were making an inside effort to get black members, even adjusting the rules to make it easier for them, felt unfairly tarred by the journalists' brush—indeed, themselves victims of "discrimination"; black students in my residence hall were delighted to see their own feelings confirmed in the articles; some faculty who would grant that racial segregation was wrong in principle could not muster much indignation if a bunch of otherwise nice-enough white boys wanted to keep their private club to themselves.

Nevertheless, the trustees were willing to grant that there might be a problem, and the fraternities and sororities, as a group, were asked to set up an affirmative action program. A year passed and the program was barely perceptible. Another year passed. Last year the Greek-life committee of fraternities and sororities finally sponsored a campus-racism public forum. The Beggars donned their blue blazers and put in an appearance at the Black Student Union cocktail party, and the committee issued an affirmative action plan, which says the Greek system is open to everyone, rejects any quotas, and grants themselves five more years to show the results of their integration efforts. By then, of course, the authors of the plan will have graduated.

Meanwhile, other evidence of trouble was piling up. In the fall of 1988, a *Maroon* editor wrote a satirical column attacking racism using the mimicked voice of a Southern bigot. But black students misread the column and complained to the local NBC black anchorman, who promptly ran an evening news lead story chiding the white student journalist.

On Martin Luther King's birthday last year and in the following week, roving bands of black teenagers attacked and beat up whites on the edge of the French Quarter, including three students from the residence hall where I am a resident counselor. In response to these events, I scheduled one of our regular late-night dorm discussions to deal with the topic of racism on campus. Then last spring, the racial turmoil that had bubbled beneath New Orleans's surface became evident to the nation. Affluent Metairie, New Orleans's white-flight suburb, in spite of opposition from religious leaders, including a letter from Loyola's president to alumni living in Metairie, elected David Duke, the smooth-talking, ex-Nazi Ku Klux Klan Republican, to the Louisiana legislature.

Loyola students woke up to see a group of tables moved by some of their fellow students to form a swastika in their quad. At a tiny rally that night, they (including two who had been beaten by blacks) signed up to oppose Duke, and some traveled to the state capital in Baton Rouge to protest his installation. A few nights later, a black student who had been beaten bloody by whites downtown returned to the dorm in the early morning and attacked the first white boy he saw. I woke up to find a scrawled sign stuck to my door: "Why Don't We All Get Together For Another Hapless [Did he mean hopeless?] Racial Talk. Boy, the Last One Sure Solved a Whole Hell of a Lot Father Ray! WAKE UP."

So why not forget it, leave the fraternities and sororities alone, blacks and whites, to go their separate ways? Blacks who will tell me that the Beggars are historically racist show little interest in getting them integrated. One said, "Expecting me to join them

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is like asking me to join the Klan." There is no 1990 equivalent of James Meredith, who, with the help of the U.S. Army, single-handedly integrated the University of Mississippi in 1962. Indeed, today few young blacks even recognize his name—unless they read the news stories about his going to work for Jesse Helms. One excellent black student applied last year to all three frats. Both the Beggars and one other fraternity (which has one black member) turned him down and he took the rejection without protest. When the same student received the year-end award for promoting racial understanding, another black student wrote in the *Maroon* that he had "assimilated." Meanwhile whites are quick to point to the Black Student Union and local black frats and sororities as proof that the blacks themselves are responsible for de facto segregation.

Indeed, last year the goal of integrating student social life was made more complex, in my judgment, by the establishment on campus of a new black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha—part of a multiplying group of black fraternities who, rather than establish new directions, mimic the most destructive aspects of their white counterparts, reinforcing their identity with elaborate military rituals, hazing, and, for some young men, branding their biceps and chests. "You're an Omega for life," one brandee told the *New York Times* (October 2, 1989).

Why persist with the conviction that exclusively all-white or all-black institutions, whether by law or "tradition," have no place on a university campus? Because the purpose of a university is to break down stereotypes, to change one's perception of reality. Because social clubs, with their intense bonding and overwhelming peer pressure, can be even more decisive in the student's moral formation—for good or ill—than the classroom or the chapel. As long as students can use them as enclaves, to ward off the challenge of change—to retain the solipsistic world view of the adolescent—they thwart the purpose of the university.

One of the things that has struck me most in the papers my students have written on racism is how often white students—rather than extrapolate from James Baldwin's and Alice Walker's sufferings to sympathize with other blacks—see *themselves* as victims of racial prejudice. A girl in a predominantly black grammar school is sure she is not picked for the basketball team because she is white. A high school girl with a black girl friend loses that friend because of peer pressure from other blacks. A group of boys walking home are hassled by black boys. Someone's uncle is not promoted to fire chief because an allegedly less qualified black gets the post through affirmative action. At the racism open forum, a Beggar complained that he had visited a Black Student Union meeting and been made to feel out of place; a black woman replied that she's glad he experienced that because that's how blacks feel every day.

At the same time, some papers show considerable sensitivity and a desire for better racial relations. One young white man invited to a Mardi Gras ball escorted a young black woman—and was promptly thrown out. A young white woman robbed at knifepoint by a black man was more upset by her landlady's racist talk—"If some nigger ever puts foot in our driveway, I'll blow his goddamn ass off!"—than by her own brush with death.

COMING
All About Mothers
Jo McGowan
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In a sense, each of these incidents is valid within the context of that person's experience. Perhaps, too, within the same context, each frat brother experiences his isolated "brotherhood" as an occasion for personal growth. But, it seems to me, there will be little personal, intellectual, or moral growth as long as blacks and whites on campuses are allowed to go on making their judgments purely in terms of their immediate personal experiences. That's the very opposite of education.

Meanwhile, the affirmative action process moved slowly. A black girl liked the Beggars enough to want to be a "little sister" (a widespread system which attaches groups of college women to fraternities, a system which feminists consider sexist and which national fraternity reformers oppose), but she was frozen out, she thought, by the white "little sisters." Some of the traditionally white sororities have attracted a few black members. Last spring a couple of black males reportedly showed up at a Beggars rush party, but, for whatever reason, they never joined. I believe that within the frats and sororities there are those who sense that something might be wrong, who may perceive that when they withdraw into their white-like-us world they are somehow diminished as well as made to feel secure. But, if those persons exist and if they speak up at meetings, there is little evidence that they are being heard.

Suddenly, in the last weeks of May 1989, events took a dramatic turn: the vice-president for student affairs suspended the whole Beggars fraternity for six months for hazing violations. Told they could return only if they affiliated with a national organization, got a new moderator, and disassociated themselves from a prominent Beggars alumnus deemed a negative influence, the Beggars yelled defiance. In a letter, they called on their alumni to cut off donations to the university and their president declared that, "the Beggars will continue to exist longer than Loyola."

Alumni started knocking at the university president's door. For a while this fall, the administration, citing respect for the Beggars' long history, began to negotiate their return. But when a banned alumnus showed up at a frat Halloween party, the deal was off. The Beggars' charter has not been renewed, and the sixty-eight-year-old fraternity is considered legally dead.

This semester, once again Martin Luther King Day got nasty in New Orleans. Bands of unruly black youths roamed the downtown area, and in fights among themselves one was stabbed to death and another was shot. I have received a "Dear Louisianian" letter from David Duke, who is running for the United States Senate, attacking "special privileges for minorities" and promising to fight for me. In our little world, the Beggars—now underground—are recruiting a new pledge class. They still have the house their patron provided. They will be together. And they can stay the same. □

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MARIE-DOMINIQUE CHENU

A TRIBUTE

JOSEPH A. KOMONCHAK

Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., died on February 11, and his death should not be allowed to pass unnoticed. Perhaps he was not as well known to the American Catholic public as some of the other theological giants of this century, but there were few men who participated more fully and typified more clearly most of the great movements which led up to Vatican II, were at the heart of its achievement, and still determine in many ways the great tasks and opportunities of theology.

Father Chenu once described two Chenus: "One is the old medievalist, of some reputation, busy reading old texts, erudite, acquainted with the ancient ages of Christianity, mediating a tradition to a new age. And then there is the other Chenu, this one young, frisky, romping like a kid in the trenches of Holy Church, living in the full hurly-burly of the contemporary world, sensitive to its calls, ready to engage the most ticklish problems of the world and of the faith, talked about, suspect to some...." But, he insisted, there is really only one Chenu, interested in both "the most serene theological study and the most apostolic impatience for the Gospel."

Serene study and apostolic impatience: I don't know that there are better words to sum up the man's two great passions. Chenu first made a name for himself as a medieval scholar at Le Saulchoir, the Dominican house of studies to which twentieth-century theology owes a debt it is difficult to overestimate. He returned there in 1920 after having finished a thesis in Rome that so impressed his director, the formidable Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, that he had asked Chenu to stay on as his assistant. But while Chenu was willing to acknowledge the contribution his mentor had made to the recovery of spiritual theology, he was not comfortable with Garrigou's utter lack of a sense of history. Father Chenu had already felt the stifling effect of the antimodernist "white terror" that prevailed in Rome, summed up by one of his friends in the comment: "There are four transcendentals here: the One, the True, the Good, and the Opportune, and the last one governs the other three."

Instead of remaining in Rome, Chenu chose Le Saulchoir where an effort was being made to construct a program of studies that would reflect two great principles: the primacy of the revealed Gospel, both as content and as inner light, and the disciplines of each of the steps involved in theological reflection on revelation, mediated through and available only in history. The faculty of Le Saulchoir determined to apply to the study of Thomas Aquinas the same principles of historical criticism that Lagrange had already defended in the study of Scripture. Chenu was centrally involved in the effort: the foundation of the Institute for Medieval Studies and its later counterpart in Canada, scholarly journals, and a series of scholarly articles that quickly made his name known in medieval studies. He tried to do for the study of Thomas what the French *Annales* school was attempting for history in general—providing a social and intellectual context for the historical facts and texts. His great insistence, unforgettably articulated in his *Introduction to the Study of St. Thomas Aquinas*, was to insert the man in his context, literary and philosophical, of course, but also historical, sociological, and economic. "To watch a master-theologian emerge and go to work, in a century when theologians and theology were not separated from the world, from its conditions, from its perspectives, from its techniques, from its culture, is a great spectacle, and a lesson for anyone who now sees theology exiled and vainly jealous of its rights."

At the same time, he was beginning the apostolic commitments of the "other Chenu." The newly-founded Young Christian Workers (YCW) settled upon Le Saulchoir as one of its spiritual centers, and Chenu delighted in his encounters with these apostolic groups engaged in the church's encounter with the modern world. His superiors named him as a theological advisor to several publications sponsored by the Dominicans to give Christian interpretations of contemporary events and movements: *La vie intellectuelle, Sept, Masses ouvrières, La vie catholique*. In 1937, long before Karl Rahner's famous article on the global church, he published an article on "New Dimensions of Christendom," whose argument for a variety of "Christendoms," temporal realizations of Christianity, Canon Joseph Cardijn adopted as a program for YCW. Chenu saw the many movements emergent in the 1930s as attempts similar to the great apostolic movements of Francis of Assisi and Dominic; new endeavors for a new world that had rendered traditional forms of the apostolate ineffective.

The two-Chenus-in-one were apparent right from the beginning: current challenges provoking inquiry into the tradition at one of its most creative moments, the historical study suggesting

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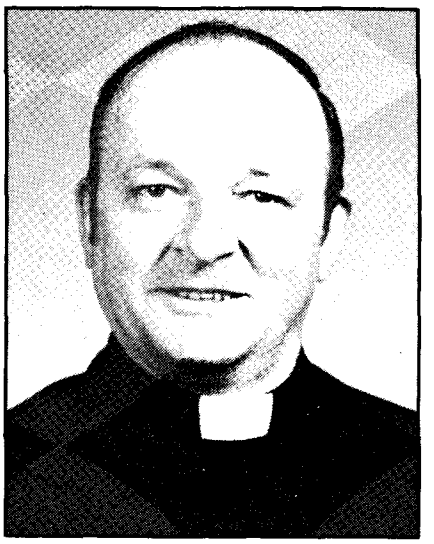
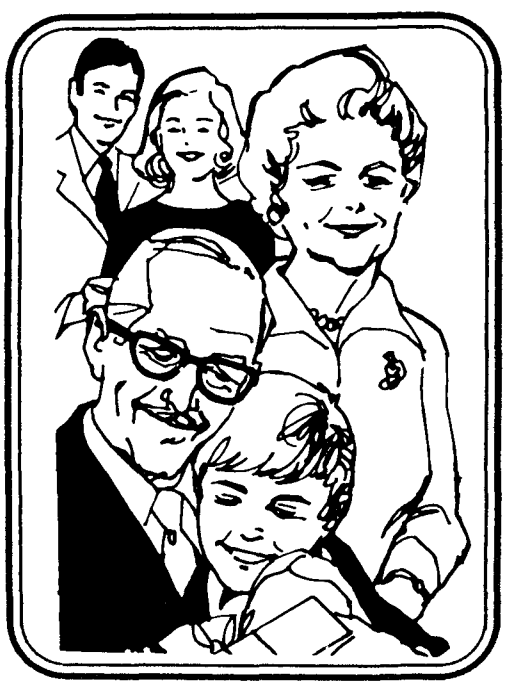


Fr. Donald Mulrenan, SVD



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and illumining new and bold initiatives. Both passions are visible in the work that first brought him under Roman censure, a little book, intended for internal use of his community, *Une école de théologie: Le Saulchoir* (1937). Basically a description and theological explanation of the program of studies in his Dominican house, it was accompanied by typically sardonic comments about the reduction of Thomas's thought to a system of principles, syllogisms, and conclusions, a "sacred metaphysics." The work was delated to Rome where he was called to explain himself and pressured to sign a list of ten propositions to give proof of his orthodoxy. His statement that "a theology worthy of the name is a spirituality which has found rational instruments adequate to its religious experience" was interpreted as subjectivism; his view that the one faith could be articulated in various theological systems, as relativism. In 1942, in the midst of World War II, he would hear over the radio that his work had been put on the Index; he was deprived of his title as Master of Theology, removed from his post at Le Saulchoir, and ordered to go live in Paris.

He was later to regard this forced move as providential, for Paris gave him even greater opportunities for the apostolic engagements by which he enriched his theology. He became a counselor to many of the new apostolic endeavors that were the glory of French Catholicism in the late 1940s, particularly the *Mission de France* and the worker-priest experiment. This work did not pass without criticism, even in his own house. When some of his fellow Dominicans objected to the presence of *L'Humanité*, the Communist journal, in their reading room, he reminded them that Thomas, when writing on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, kept a copy of Averroes's commentary on his desk: "Now Averroes today," he said, "is Marx."

Chenu escaped censure in Pius XII's encyclical, *Humani generis*, but four years later the axe that had fallen on the Jesuits at Fourvière-Lyons in 1950 would fall on the intellectual leaders of the French Dominicans. (The details of this sad story have been set out in exhaustive detail in François Leprieur's recent book, *Quand Rome condamne: Dominicains et prêtres-ouvrièrs.*) Under Roman threat radically to alter the age-old constitutions of the Dominicans, the father general requested and obtained the resignations of the three provincials of France and the removal and banishment from their posts of Congar, Chenu, Feret, and Boisselot (the head of their publishing house, Éditions du Cerf). The immediate excuse was the defense that Congar and Chenu had made of the worker-priest experiment, with Chenu justifying their priesthood by distinguishing the tasks of the priest in a regime of Christendom and those in a "church in a state of mission," a phrase he coined. François Mauriac described the effect of the Roman move as "like dynamiting one of our cathedrals."

One result was that Chenu never served in any official capacity at Vatican II, but a former student of his, a bishop in Madagascar, invited him to come to Rome as his personal expert. Chenu's influence at the council was everted from the first day to the last. Even before it opened, Congar and he distributed a draft of an evangelically inspired "Message to the World." Even after the inevitable revisions—"They soaked my brat in holy water," was his comment—he was content that the council opened with an appeal to the world instead of with the defensively antimodernist doctrinal texts prepared for the council to rubberstamp. Much of the basic anthropology and soteriology of *Gaudium et spes*, reflects Chenu's influence, including an optimism, much-maligned today, that in him was never simply a personal trait, but confidence in the light and power of the Gospel. He also took personal pride in the council's statements on the unity of creation and redemption in its *Decree on the Laity* and delighted to see the council reaffirm the validity of the worker-priest experiment.

In the years after the council, Chenu's openness and enthusiasm never wavered. I remember him in Paris in 1985 after the extraordinary synod of bishops. In a room that was all bookshelves, crammed tight with volumes and all sorts of papers, he eagerly asked what had happened, beamed with delight at some news, threw his arms up in disbelief at others. Last November when I saw him, he was frailer, with sight and hearing impaired; but he was still the heart and delight of the group of his fellows who gathered in his room for conversation between the community liturgy and dinner.

He was ninety-five when he died, surrounded by his beloved brethren at the Couvent Saint Jacques. Cardinal Lustiger presided over his funeral at Notre Dame, assisted by six bishops, two hundred and fifty priests, and a full cathedral. A letter from John Paul II was read. These posthumous gestures are, unforgivably, the only tokens of ecclesiastical rehabilitation that he ever received. Congar, eighty-six years old himself and under special care at Les Invalides, preferred not to attend the funeral. They had always been so close to one another spiritually, he said, that he thought nothing had really changed with Chenu's death.

The French sociologist Emile Poulat has often remarked on the remarkable ability of one generation of Catholics to forget the generation immediately prior to them. This would be particularly tragic in the case of Marie-Dominique Chenu, for there are few authentic features of the church as we know it and of theology as we practice it that he did not have a share in shaping: the struggle to find new forms of evangelical and apostolic commitment, the reading of the "signs of the times," the vitality of small, committed groups as a theological source, the overcoming of a sclerotic scholasticism, the insistence on the primacy of the Gospel both as message and as inspiring light, the inseparability of the retrieval of the tradition and the confrontation of the world's problems. □

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EASTER BUNNIES & XMAS TREES

WHO WILL PASS ON THE FAITH?

J. PAUL MARTIN

Eighteen months of teaching Sunday school in a small country parish in upstate New York have generated in me a profound concern for the transmission of our Christian heritage and its implications for tomorrow's local churches. Who will comprise that church? What will be religiously important when today's children grow up? What will these local churches offer? If the answer is based on the current social conditions in these parishes and on the children's own perceptions of religion, it does not point to dynamic communities of faith.

One striking aspect about parishes like the one where I teach is the continuing dominance of the individual parish priest, reflecting especially his age and personal interests. The few clergy who are under forty-five are looking past these rural settings for more urban environments, while the more numerous older priests are edging toward a retirement that everyone knows will probably leave most parishes like this without a permanent minister. With a priest in residence, the parish atmosphere is characterized by traditional values of service and loyalty: the faith has brought a people thus far, it ought to be trusted and one ought to respond to its call to the moral life. More pressing questions are kept below the surface in a community where the right-to-life agenda and religious observance appear as the touchstones of fidelity and offer the only glimmers of theological enquiry. Parish life focuses around the priest, Sunday Mass, and a few parish organizations and activities, including the Sunday school.

Teaching the parish children about their faith every Sunday is a task consigned to a group of volunteers, mostly women and mostly, unlike myself, experienced primary and high school teachers. We use the latest in catechetical publications, each child having his or her own textbook which each takes home and is encouraged to show to his or her parents. The children seem to come from stable family situations. Many of their parents are active in local community affairs. Compared with children of similar ages in an urban situation, they compare favorably in their knowledge of public affairs.

Most unexpected to me has been the lack of religious literacy among the children; moreover it appears to lose ground relative to their other knowledge as they advance in age. The majority are unfamiliar with and certainly unresponsive to such basic symbols of the Christian faith as the Fall, Jesus as savior, and the broader mission of the church. The fourth graders are not particularly attracted by such traditional practices as confession and saying the rosary. Gone also is a theological understanding, if not also any knowledge of the Old Testament images of the flood (at best just an animal story), the deliverance from Egypt, as well as the sense of the covenant and the Hebrews being the chosen people. At first I put this down to my own inability to communicate with them or to the fact that I had been introducing new ideas without necessarily inquiring about their own religious experience. They were clearly familiar with the rituals associated with church-going, but as time goes by, I have become more disillusioned by the level of their more general religious consciousness...but not yet pessimistic.

Only a small minority of the children talk with their parents about religion in terms other than going to church or going to Sunday school. Few have ever read Bible stories with their parents, although at least half say prayers every day and some have video tapes of religious stories. About two-thirds of the children coming to Sunday school go to the Mass that day, some with, but some without, their parents. The relevance of religion and religious teaching for both parents and their children seems to be confined to moral education. Gone is a sense of Christianity as a comprehensive view of life. Gone is much responsiveness to Christian symbols ranging from Christ himself to individual figures and doctrines. Thus, for example, in spite of its annual celebrations, the prominence given to the feast, as well as numerous sermons on the topic, on the basis of random questions in conversation, I find most Catholics cannot give a reasonably accurate description of the Immaculate Conception. As a teacher, I have found myself searching with difficulty for starting points within the children's experience that would make it easier to introduce them to religious concepts. For many of them and their families, there is little distinction or tension between the American way of life and their religious consciousness. Our common civic culture appears to provide them with adequate definitions of, for example, the divinity as well as Christmas. For them the latter is fully explained in terms of trees, decorations, Santa, and family gift-giving, while Easter is a time for bunnies, eggs, and candies. In a media-dominated world, many traditional Christian symbols are losing their power.

The Eucharist, the Mass, or church on Sunday, as most of them call it, is the central if not exclusive religious activity of the week for many children. When asked, my current fourth-graders all described the service as boring. When we began to

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discuss how to improve it, other than making its various parts shorter, their suggestions went in often conflicting directions: less singing, more modern music, more explanations for children, better bread, etc. A number of parents saw these reactions as typical of that age and believed they would grow out of it. I was much less optimistic. To me it appears as one more sign of an enfeebled Christian culture. In contrast to their perceptions of the Christian worldview, these fourth-graders have a fairly comprehensive view of personal sin, although they do not like to call it that. They are most aware of actions that undermine human and especially peer relationships: lying, stealing, fighting and bullying, anger, ignoring or rejecting others, insults, bad language, lack of respect for others and their feelings. They also can talk about responsibilities towards the less fortunate: the sick, the elderly, the handicapped, and the poor. They are aware of their responsibilities and failings toward their family and their local community. It is hard to find within their moral conscience a sense of the relevance of their Christian community or of the relationship between sin and a God in history.

As a catechist, I sense the need to prepare better our children for tomorrow. We not only have to hand on the heritage, we must also prepare them for great and fairly immediate social changes. One of the most obvious will be the shape of their local Christian community. Weak though the children's perception of it is and without the priest who defines it today, the degree to which tomorrow's parish is either a nurturing Christian community or simply a building maintained for the visiting priest to dispense the sacraments will depend on its lay members. No one in this parish talks about that reality which, given the demographics of the priestly population, will come here as it has and will to many other parishes throughout the country.

The implications of this one fact are enormous. In many respects it might be the challenge that these communities need, to force them to take active responsibility for their parish. At the level of Christian education, it calls for a context in which children begin to see themselves as active members with substantial responsibilities. One of the children once asked me why no one talked with the priest during the the sermon or the Mass. No answer I could think of had any evangelical base. It would, on the other hand, be a step toward more active participation. As a catechist, the impending changes and their consequences force me to examine my priorities in order to use the limited time at my disposal on the dimensions of the gospel message that go beyond religious and moral observance. This is not the emphasis in the textbooks.

On the basis of this experience, I can return to the three questions asked above: the future composition of the local churches, their religious significance, and what they will have to offer to their members. It is hard to predict who will comprise the church. Will it be only prolife activists? Their concerns are one of the few nationwide issues that distinguish the public agenda of the Catholic church from the rest of society. The Christian and specifically the Catholic heritage in its broader terms, not to mention the documents of the bishops' conference on world peace and economic reform, hardly filter down to these communities. How will they have more impact tomorrow?

In these parishes, there is very little sense of the problems and the achievements of the church worldwide except for the annual collection and the sermon on the missions. The religious significance of the church today seems to be reduced to its moral positions. Its theological treasures, such as its insights into the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, have been lost to view, perhaps the victims of a certain religious pluralism and desire for civic respectability.

The local church is thus in danger of evolving into a holograph, where the image looks right but where there is very little content beyond religious observance. Without resident priests, the local churches of tomorrow will have lost the primary focus they have today, leaving them to face new territory with little in the way of preparation, leadership, or resources. What is the model for our country (and indeed city) parishes tomorrow and what should we all be doing now to prepare the next generations to live and to hand on the Christian gospel in their age? □

MEDIA

JUST A MOMENT

THE LOGIC OF NINTENDO

Jeremy Rifkin, who writes on technology and culture, wrote a brilliant book called *Time Wars* a few years ago. Its point—garnished with an elegant salad-bar of recondite and fascinating detail—is that, from prehistory on, a very large part of the way we think about ourselves has to do with the way we measure time. In Rifkin's book, for example—and he is quite convincing about this—the invention of the clock, or the much later invention of the second-hand, is as important a turning-point in human self-definition as the discovery of the laws of motion or of nuclear fission.

And one of Rifkin's main assertions in *Time Wars* is that, in our increasingly accurate measurement of time, we have in fact broken through to a new "kind" of time—computer time—which, subdivided by the speed of light itself, surpasses all our attempts to "measure" it and thence becomes a kind of nonhuman time that measures us.

It sounds like classic science fiction—the machine coming to dominate its creator—until you think about Nintendo.

Like a great number of Americans, I count among the members of my household an adolescent; and that means that, like a great number of Americans, I have a Nintendo set in my home. Although I'm not sure, computer illiterate that I am, that "set" is the exact term: device? hookup? matrix? At any rate, I have in my home a thing that allows my twelve-year-old to plug it in and play not on it but with it. These engagements range from fantasy games, complete with appropriate music and sound effects, to medieval quest-romances through contemporary films like *Batman* and *Roger Rabbit* to originals like "Play Action Football" and the cosmically popular "Super Mario Brothers"—whose scenario, come to think of it, is pretty much

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that of a medieval quest-romance.

It is of course addictive. Eric, our own Nintendo commando, has been known to disappear into his room for hours of rapt communion with the set, exclaiming his triumph over various obstacles in the game to the accompaniment of assorted computer beeps and burbles—almost as if he were on a date with R2D2. Even more interestingly, several drinks-and-dinner guests of my g-g-generation have disappeared into the room with Eric, emerging later with shamefaced grins and muttering things like, "Yeah, that's a really hard game to stop—hey, sorry, have I held things up?"

This is exactly Rifkin's point: that when you interface with the computer, you interface with truly instantaneous time—or as nearly instantaneous as lightspeed can be—and regular time is thereby suspended. You blink less; you don't get hungry or thirsty as fast as you would, say, reading a book, just because, for the "time" you're playing "Super Mario," you are in a kind of sempiternity. William Gibson, who may be the hottest young writer in science fiction, and the father of what is called "cyberpunk"—actually an overlay of conventional thriller plot on computer-technology—shows this effect as clearly as Rifkin analyzes it. In his wonderful novel, *Neuromancer*, Gibson gives us the adventures of a futuristic computer cowboy in "cyberspace," which is transparently modeled on the experience of playing computer games, and whose plot—no one else, I think, has noticed this—is basically a discovery of the transcendently wise Artificial Intelligence based quite strictly on the structure of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

We have come quite a way from "Pong," the only computer game at which I was ever very good. But don't worry: this is not going to be one of those essays where an older-generation grump discovers that a new technology is rotting the cognitive faculties of the young and producing a future race of ethical mutants. To the contrary.

Much as I admire both Rifkin and Gibson, I can't bring myself to believe that interfacing with the computer will finally either corrode our biological clocks or lead us to a perception of God. I take a more moderate view.

Maybe because I am an outsider, a nonplayer of the games, I can notice something not immediately apparent to those within the net. And it is this. My generation, which grew up with "Captain Video" and "Howdy Doody" and later graduated to "Star Trek" and "Magnum P.I.," is also the generation that gave rise to the concept of the couch potato, and which—this is not irrelevant—elected Nixon twice and then Reagan twice. TV, as a crucial but almost always unacknowledged fact of our lives, conditioned us to be receptors. The TV went one way—toward us—and over what it had to tell us, we had precious little control. The one experience, probably, which every American family has in common is checking the listings for the night "to see what's on": not really to choose, that is, but to see the limited options available. And that experience—the experience of being a kind of hostage audience to a national ritual of entertainment and information—may have more to do with our public failure of nerve over the last three decades than any other single fact. We did not need to be bullied into behaving like cattle, we did it to ourselves, every night at five or six o'clock, depending on your time zone.

And now comes a technology that allows our kids to talk back to the omnipotent box, to use the box in an exercise of skill, dexterity, and—something we would never have thought of in relation to the TV—altering the events on the screen.

No illusions here: the people at Nintendo, and the numerous companies fighting them over monopolization of the market, are obviously in the very singleminded business of making you buy your kids as many of their games as you can afford. I do not believe that they are informed by a higher epistemological purpose. But then again, they don't have to be. The fact is that the computer game is potentially creative and liberating. At least, it may represent a moment at which technology, moving as always at its own pace and according to its own potencies, actually reinforces a sense of individual choice which had previously all but atrophied. Could a generation trained to fight the screen, to figure out ways of beating the game on the screen—could such a generation, one wonders, have been quite so complacent, for quite so long, about the nightly reports of our obscene game in Vietnam?

So Rifkin may have been too pessimistic.

And maybe I'll even join Eric at the set sometime and try to punch out Mike Tyson (now that we know it's possible).

FRANK McCONNELL

Frank McConnell is a member of the English Department at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

SCREEN

THE BOOKS WERE BETTER

'HANDMAID'S TALE' & 'RED OCTOBER'

Dull-witted adolescent righteousness is the sacred vocabulary of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Adapted from Margaret Atwood's well-received novel, the movie is a feeble and incoherent political allegory set in a futuristic time but a very familiar landscape. Indeed, much of the action takes place in a neighborhood that looks like the set for "Leave it to Beaver." A few concrete bunkers and military watchtowers, and a gaggle of black-uniformed guards serve as more menacing representations of our zoning ordinances. What is about to unfold, we are told, takes place in the country of Gilead, where something went "very wrong."

Provoked by the political influence and licentious antics of various "pressure groups," a Bible-touting and sexually purified elite has taken over America. Robert Duvall, who affects an eerie impersonation of Ronald Reagan, is the police and military commander for the Scripture-thumping junta. He speaks like Jerry Falwell and operates like Heinrich Himmler. Undesirables are herded into concentration camps; slave labor tends to the municipal lawns; subversives are exterminated.

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This drear fable is animated by a kind of giddy blaspheming that takes a parodic delight in equating hymn singing with brainwashing, religion with fascism, sexual modesty with oppression, and most traditional notions of femininity with patriarchal violence. It all has the leaden touch of an undergraduate satirical review. "Blessed be the fruit," is one of the pious encomiums mouthed by the politically correct. A reading from Genesis is used to sanction the most absurd and vile of sexual violations. In short, every mention of God and religion is accompanied by some predictable atrocity or obvious secular platitude.

Ideologically, the commander and his cohorts preach the Republican party platform. Indeed, the movie, which was directed by Volker Schlondorff, seems to be the work of people whose experience of evil is so slight that they can equate the folksy reactionary gibberish of Reaganism with genocidal misogynist violence, and the simplistic moralizing of Christian fundamentalism with totalitarianism. Give us a break. No, this pornographic political fantasy is more a symptom of the dehumanization inherent in mass secular society than a plausible cautionary tale about the evil lurking in the heart or under the pillbox hats of church-going suburbanites.

Gilead's unique contribution to infamy is its treatment of women. As a result of industrial and nuclear pollution, the vast majority of women are infertile. Working ovaries are in great demand. A class of fecund concubines, or "handmaids," is requisitioned by the state. These women are brainwashed and then distributed as breeding stock among the elite. A handmaid, consecrated to her task in a mock religious ceremony, takes up residence with the sterile spouses. She is called upon to submit to a hands-on procreative procedure in the presence of the unfruitful wife. It's a macabre ritual, the work of a fastidiously prurient mind.

Natasha Richardson (*Patty Hearst*), Vanessa Redgrave's gifted daughter, plays the handmaid Kate. Traumatized by the murder of her husband and the loss of her young daughter, Ms. Richardson's Kate has an affectless demeanor that soon grows tiresome. When she comes up against Faye Dunaway, who plays the commander's predatory and imperious wife, this blunt approach seems especially unfortunate. Dunaway, as usual, slices through the pretense, giving the horror some real flesh and blood.

Much of the story is taken up with the convent-like indoctrination procedures used on the handmaids. Prissy but brutal matrons run the program with switches at the ready. Women are physically mutilated for masturbating and hanged for illicit fornication. Abortion, prevalent before the revolution, is righteously denounced. Rape is judged a woman's fault. Meanwhile, behind closed doors, the commander and his staff indulge in Hugh Hefner-like fantasies. A leather fetishist lurks just below the surface of every outspoken prude.

To say the least, there is nothing subtle about this inverted world. In orthodox feminist fashion, *The Handmaid's Tale* is intent on laying the blame for violence and oppression on a male fear of female sexuality and autonomy. Kate's truest soulmate is a wise-cracking lesbian played by Elizabeth McGovern, who has been convicted of "gender treachery." Oddly, it's a kind of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid pairing.

As allegory this negative utopia is simple-minded and inert. Kate manfully rises to violence in defense of her dignity, but she must rely on a handsome blue-eyed stud (Aidan Quinn) for rescue and love. More contradictory, Kate's truest and deepest actions and Richardson's most powerful dramatic moments come in reclaiming her status as a mother. The sundering of the (dare we call it) natural relationship between mother and child is what gives *The Handmaid's Tale* what little emotional life it has. Ironically, that atavistic longing is where real freedom resides in this fashionable horror story.

Moving away completely from the politics of sex brings us to *The Hunt for Red October*, a patriotic holy card confidently boasting that a Jeffersonian Democrat with an insatiable longing for a recreational vehicle is locked in the heart of every Russian. Sean Connery stars as Captain Markos Ramius in this water-logged adventure taken from the novel by Tom Clancy. Ramius, a secession-minded Lithuanian, is the grand old man of the Soviet submarine force. He forsakes his vocation, however, when asked to skipper the new super-quiet sub *Red October*. The ship's jet-like propulsion system makes it virtually undetectible by the Americans, and thus a destabilizing weapon. Ramius's attempt to defect and hand this bit of technological wizardry over to the Americans brings the world to the brink of apocalypse.

The Hunt for Red October has suspense, or at least induced anxiety. Connery is as grave and resolute as Lenin. Director John McTiernan crosscuts deftly between blinking circuitry, underwater obstacles, gaining torpedoes, and sweaty brows. But this is all manipulation of a very mechanical sort. Connery is dressed up to look a bit like Jules Verne's Captain Nemo, and he barely can summon the energy to lift an eyebrow every now and then. Much of the glitzy electronic video equipment, all bathed in soft, numinous lighting, looks real enough. But what is that roll of toilet paper doing hanging in the middle of the sonar panel? And why, if the *Red October* is such a threat, does the hot-shot sonar expert aboard the U.S. submarine crack the mystery in less than ten minutes?

On the American side we are introduced to a succession of virile if chaste can-do types. Alec Baldwin plays Jack Ryan, the dedicated, impossibly earnest CIA analyst who must convince his gung-ho superiors to hold their fire until he can schmooze with Ramius. Scott Glenn, one of the nastiest looking hombres in the movies, commands the U.S. sub that tracks Ramius down. His approach to the Soviets seems modeled after George Bush's horror of broccoli.

The Hunt for Red October is prostrate before the mumbo-jumbo, the sacred incantations, of military virtue and American exceptionalism. America's moral superiority guides every missile, deflects every threatening torpedo. In the end, Ryan takes Ramius up a river in a still pristine American wilderness. Taking in his surroundings, the defector quotes Christopher Columbus. Ryan brightly responds, "Welcome to the New World, sir." And welcome, comrade, to a new world of clichés.

PAUL BAUMANN

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STAGE

MEETING & MELDING

THREE COUPLES

There have been several new two-character plays produced recently for limited runs. Each of the three being reviewed here features a couple and deals with love and sex within the intimidating context of American society—or one segment of it. More than just time lies between these works and an innocently knowing 1950s play like Jan de Hartog's *The Fourposter*.

The most ambitious of the three is Donald Freed's *Alfred and Victoria: A Life*, which had its East Coast premiere at Philadelphia's Wilma Theater. The titular couple is not the dear queen and her consort, but Alfred Bloomingdale, one of those California millionaires who helped create Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, and his mistress. In brief scenes that cover twelve years beginning in 1968, we see Alfred hiring Vicki for S & M games, teaching her to read and understand classics (a form of domination), forcing her to abort a child she wants, finally becoming softly attached to her. Freed said in an interview in the Philadelphia *Inquirer* that he saw the play as a love story, but Alfred insists through much of the play that power and property, not love, are what the world is about. In the final scene—a confusing phantasmagoria of light and movement as played at the Wilma—money is the dominating image; Alfred triumphs over the author.

Before the play begins and between scenes, we see the two actors making-up, dressing, preparing for the scene they are about to perform. But since the play is not about role-playing, except as all life is, there seems little point to this stage device. Between scenes, the stage is flooded with changing images and voices, setting the political, social, and cultural atmosphere of the year about to be presented. All this adds up to a calendar and to an indictment of an America formed by men like Alfred who, in the end, becomes a victim of his own creation. It is difficult to tell whether the playwright or the director, Blanka Zizka, was responsible for the choices that went into the connecting collages and the babble of voices. As *Inquest*, Freed's play on the Rosenbergs, indicates, the playwright finds dramatic (didactic?) value in the use of photographic projections, and the Wilma has a passion for theatrical gimmicks. In any case, the two characters are inundated by devices and never become people whose self-inflicted pain can move us.

Lavonne Mueller's *Violent Peace*, developed by The Women's Project, is the last of her war trilogy. It takes place in a hotel room in Kansas City in which a young woman, the daughter of a general whose funeral has just taken place, locks up an army officer so that the two of them can rummage through their shared past. However realistic the dialogue, the setting is as arbitrary and as artificial as the one in Sartre's *No Exit*. In direct conversation and in flashbacks, which do not work very well, we learn that Mark has been nanny, cook, teacher, and confidant to Kim since she was a small motherless child. In time, they became lovers as well, and Mark, who thinks she deserted him for a civilian on a motorcycle, learns that she has had his child and buried it with the dogtags he had given her. Their long relationship has produced only a dead child and resentment and pain on both sides. At the end, they can separate—Mark to his wife, Kim to her post-Mark life. They have reached a "violent peace," a term, Mueller says in a program note, borrowed from the Pentagon description of actions in Central America ("It's a peace that entails a lot of bloodshed"). This is not a gratuitous borrowing since Mueller, who was raised an army brat, sees Kim and Mark, as a couple, as the product of a world in which the general, a distant power figure to both of them, is a dangerous and disruptive presence—as the American military is in Central America. When the program was printed, the time was "The Present," but events in Nicaragua made it necessary for the producers to stick on a label ("1988") narrowing the time of the play. Anyone who has read (or seen) Mueller's *Five in the Killing Zone* knows that she has a good ear for military dialogue. Neither her skill with the spoken word nor the solid performances by Jenny Robertson and Dennis Parlato can keep the characters from coming across only as representative figures in a political statement that is even less clear than the one in *Victoria and Albert*.

Lesbian couples are presumably subject to as much Sturm und Drang as heterosexual couples, but you would not know that from *Anniversary Waltz*. More an extended—attenuated, one might say—nightclub sketch than a play, *Anniversary Waltz* was put together and performed by Peggy Shaw and Lois Weaver, two of the three women who make up the Split Britches Company. Like many solo performing artists—Spalding Gray, Mike Feder—who find their material in their own lives, Shaw and Weaver offer what the publicity release calls "a hilarious romp through a long-term relationship." Much of the evening consists of comic exposition, an account of how they met, melded, stayed together, married—a disquisition that I found only mildly interesting not because theirs is a butch-femme relationship but because I have no real taste for other people's sex lives. Judging by most celebrity biographies and the attention given to the Trump triangle and Rob Lowe's video adventures, I am in the minority. The enthusiastic audience with whom I saw the piece—at the Women's Theatre Festival at the University of Pennsylvania just before the team moved on to an engagement at La Mama—confirmed my minority status. The Shaw-Weaver narrative was interrupted by scenes in which the performers—each taking her turn in male drag—played conventional love duets—popular songs, a bit from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*—lip-synching to recorded material. Funny the first time, it was a device that quickly wore thin. Shaw and Weaver are amusing performers (Shaw had a nice bit as a ventriloquist's dummy), but *Anniversary Waltz* is primarily political—if not quite in the manner of *Alfred and Victoria* and *Violent Peace*. It is a celebratory declaration in the face of an essentially homophobic society.

GERALD WEALES

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Good cause, bad argument

PRIVATIZATION AND EDUCATIONAL CHOICE
Myron Lieberman
St. Martin's Press, $35, $12.95 paper, 386 pp.

Charles L. Glenn

Whether to allow parents to choose the schools their children will attend is the hottest topic in education. A wide spectrum of business and political leaders have called for more choice, while education leaders (with the notable exception of Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers) are strongly opposed.

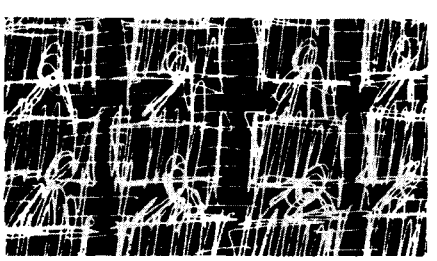
Those who call for parent choice—and I should declare at once that I am one of the few visible proponents among educators—believe that it will create the conditions for more effective education, as teachers are allowed and encouraged to create distinctive schools that express a clear pedagogical vision. Schools will become accountable to parents rather than to distant bureaucracies, and parents will be challenged to take more responsibility for the education of their children.

Opponents fear that expanded parent choice will benefit the middle class at the expense of poor children and those whose parents are uninvolved, that it will increase racial segregation, and that it could lead to a splintering of society along ideological lines because of an abandonment of the "common school."

Now, of course, middle-class parents have always found ways to make decisions about the education of their children, either by where they decide to live or by paying for private schooling. Middle-class parents living in cities find many ways to avoid enrolling their children in schools with a high proportion of poor and minority children. But these individual decisions have somehow not called into question the belief that the unity of our society is guaranteed by educating children of the most varied backgrounds together—and that in fact we are doing so, all evidence of racial and class segregation to the contrary (see my *The Myth of the Common School*, University of Massachusetts Press).

The real issue in today's debates over parent choice of schools is whether the structure of schooling should be changed to permit and encourage all parents to make decisions, either among public schools or among all available schools, public and private. In Massachusetts, for example, we have strongly encouraged urban school systems to make parent choice the basis for enrolling students in all schools, as a means of increasing race and class integration and of stimulating improvements in schools.

Advocates of expanded parent choice are in most cases keenly aware of the need to assure that it does not work against poor children or indeed against the interest of society that all future citizens receive a more effective education than at present. Detailed discussions of how to implement expanded choice while strengthening schools and advancing equity have been provided by California law professors Coons and Sugarman (*Education by Choice: The Case for Family Control*, University of California Press), by Minnesota educator Joe Nathan (*Free to Teach: Achieving Equity and Excellence in Schools*, Pilgrim), and more recently by a number of educators in Nathan's *Public Schools by Choice* (Institute of Learning and Teaching).



Myron Lieberman's new book breathes a very different spirit, in which choice is used as a blunt weapon to bludgeon a broad assortment of targets, including virtually everyone who works in public education, government, and the media. *Privatization and Educational Choice* will confirm the worst suspicions of the opponents of parent choice, that it is only the first step toward abandoning public support for education altogether.

Lieberman counts upon the selfishness of the growing proportion of voters who have no children in school to refuse to pay for the education of an increasingly minority public school enrollment. He suggests that we begin by raising the age at which publicly funded schooling starts to eight or so, and change child labor laws so that those who are not academically gifted will leave school earlier. After all, he argues, why should society provide extensive educational services "to those who cannot purchase it in the market" when the disadvantaged themselves "often prefer a higher level of protection from crime or a higher level of shelter over a higher level of educational funding?"

The growing acceptance of abortion, Lieberman argues, "is certain to weaken support for public education." If the decision to have children is a strictly personal one, why should society pay for the cost of educating those children?

In short, an appalling book arguing with relentless "logic" from libertarian premises and hostility toward all that we do together as a society to care for one another's children. Unfortunately, it may find an echo among those whose civic consciousness has been eroded by two decades of me-firstism, while bringing discredit upon responsible efforts to expand parent choice and educational diversity. □

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REVIVING THE SPIRIT

KILLING THE SPIRIT
Higher Education in America
Page Smith
Viking, $19.95, 315 pp.

Tom O'Brien

Ironically, the diatribes of William Bennett, Allan Bloom (or Charles Sykes, in the pungently titled *Profscam*), have done universities a big favor. By overstating their case and indulging in jeremiad, these right-wing critics have provided higher educators with a strawman; they have even managed to give reform a bad name. At academic conferences these days, speak in favor of core curriculums or refocusing on old ideals, and you are quickly painted in the colors of reaction.

Page Smith's *Killing the Spirit* offers something considerably different. Smith strongly contributes to the current debate by focusing on issues with greater precision but less acrimony than the "neocons." He hits their targets, but lacks their sanguinary tone. He is critical of colleges, but humorous, fair-minded, and open to new developments (such as multiculturalism and women's studies). He has a nuts-and-bolts sense of how best to serve students, not simply how to shake academic rafters. It's no recipe for headlines or best sellerdom, but may be what we need.

A historian (author of a seven-volume Penguin history of the United States), a teacher (at UCLA), and administrator (provost at UC/Santa Cruz), Smith writes without the cultural, maybe racial, and certainly sexual biases of Bennett and Bloom. He has no nostalgia for bygone golden ages of revered professors patrolling halls of ivy filled with male students of one color. He doesn't overgeneralize about the problems of colleges, but finds "oases" in the higher education "desert" where good teaching still goes on and is still encouraged. A Christian, he is at pains to assure "academic fundamentalists" that he aches to burn no one at the stake. He just thinks colleges could be open to the spirit.

His title has two meanings. The first involves protest against "academic fundamentalism," with its creation of an environment where "God is not a proper topic for discussion, but lesbian politics is." The first half of his book traces the historical roots for this, from the founding of the Ivy League and denominational schools, where religion played a key role, to the growth of secular state universities and research programs in the later nineteenth century. The war of religion and science Smith reterms the clash of "Classical Christian Consciousness" and "Secular Democratic Consciousness"; he explains why the latter won, but wishes its triumph had been less total. In his view, displacing religious teaching is one thing; displacing teaching (or writing in a scholarly way) about religion quite another; and discouraging nonreligious moral ratiocination in education is even worse.

As Smith notes, one reason for the rise of cults has been the refusal of higher educators to engage young people on issues of spiritual and emotional importance to their lives: in his view, students do like the eternal questions, if asked. Another reason, he claims, is that at least gurus teach with passion; young people, he points out, respond to that, regardless of the message being taught.

Questions about teaching dominate the second half of *Killing the Spirit*, where he laments the death of cultivated exchange between faculty and students because of the discouragement, or lack of encouragement of good teaching. The letter of faculty by-laws at most universities says teaching counts as much as scholarship in renewal and tenure; the spirit of things, of course, is different, with scholarship dominant. As Smith says (along with other reformers, like Kenneth Eble, 1988 AAUP Professor of the Year in his *The Goals of College Teaching*) this would not be so terrible if

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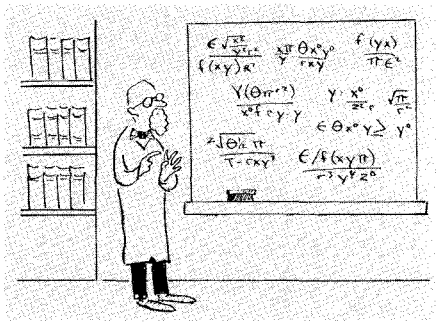
scholarship were widely defined, not reduced to research, with research further reduced to publishing specialized work for other specialists. Research has a place, Smith says, but sees its sway as the academic tail wagging the dog. One example: a dean urging faculty to hunt up grants defines good teaching as "being there." Exactly: present in body but not spirit.

Accordingly, Smith thinks the Bennett/Bloom fuss about the curriculum is overdone. He wants a "canon," but an inclusive one, with World Civilization its center, not just Western. Still, he says, it seems pointless to debate general education in the liberal arts when "first and foremost, the universities' collective heart is not in the enterprise." The present trend of faculty training and development is to specialization, he says, and faculty are rewarded for publishing in their specialties, not teaching outside them. In Smith's view, it is no accident that students don't take these courses seriously when teachers don't.

His case could be even stronger. Granting exceptions, Smith disputes the



claim that research always improves teaching. In teacher-training for general education, specialized research can't help, he says; teachers need stronger rewards for integrating disciplines and making them accessible to today's students. Still, he underplays the peril of current research, mostly in the liberal arts, where immersion in trendy jargon may hurt teaching. Why push assistant professors to speak in the tongues of avant garde French theory if their students at community and state colleges (in preprofessional programs that account for most of the growth in higher education) think Shakespeare wrote in a foreign language?

Killing the Spirit meanders at times, and it never quite fuses its historical and contemporary concerns. Still, there are thematic links and pleasant surprises. Smith's writing has warmth and humor, befitting his emphasis on such qualities in teaching. But some passages bite. Talk of an "an academic community" is "absurd and self-defeating," he says. "There is no community at all, but only atomized individuals known as specialists who hardly talk to each other, let alone to their colleagues in other fields."

Smith doesn't blame professors alone; many, he knows, believe in and practice good teaching, but are checked by administrators who define an institution's excellence by its external image. Still, we are now granting more degrees or collegiate diplomas than ever. But who would claim Americans are more educated, more culturally literate, or more capable of critical thought? Smith has a Churchillian explanation: never in the course of higher education has so much been taught so weakly to so many. As Smith says, the stakes are the future of the republic: an uneducated, (or rather, uncritical) populace is democracy's worst nightmare. □

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CONTRADICTORY TERMS

THE HUNDRED YARD LIE
The Corruption of College Football and What We Can Do to Stop It
Rick Telander
Simon & Schuster, $17.95, 223 pp.

James P. Degnan

A recent indictment of college football, Rick Telander's *The Hundred Yard Lie*, doesn't tell us much that is new. It tells us that college football has nothing to do with education, that, indeed, it is inimical to education. It tells us that college football players are not students but entertainers; that they are often admitted to college when they are unqualified for admission, are given passing grades when they should have been failed, and sometimes are allowed to graduate without being able to read or write. It also reminds us, as critics have reminded us for almost fifty years, that many college players are far from amateurs—that, in violation of the rules of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, such players routinely receive financial payments from alumni and boosters.

About the only thing at all new—and it's hardly original—in the book is Telander's plan for reforming college football, a plan to make big-time college football what it already is in everything but name: professional.

Reasoning that college football programs, and big-time college teams in particular, are little more than farm clubs for the National Football League (the University of Miami has actually advertised itself as "a pipeline to the pros"), Telander proposes that such teams—e.g., Miami, Alabama, Oklahoma—form their own professional football league. He suggests it be made up of players from eighteen to twenty-two years old and be called the Age Group Professional Football League. These players, subsidized by the NFL, would have no "grade or educational requirements whatsoever," and would constitute a minor professional league analogous to baseball's minor leagues. Such teams would no longer compete against the more academically inclined and usually smaller college teams, which in turn, Telander believes, would allow the smaller teams to become truly amateur football programs for legitimate student athletes.

Reading Telander's plan, spelled out in twenty-eight tortuous steps in the book's final pages, I am reminded of a more succinct and wiser plan articulated by Robert Maynard Hutchins. As president of the University of Chicago in 1939, Hutchins did the unthinkable. Having declared college football hopelessly corrupt, entertainment rather than education, he abolished the university's popular football program. Asked what Chicago or any other school that followed suit might do to fill the vacuum, Hutchins replied, "Why not have horse races?" Each college could have its own stables and colors, fans could make

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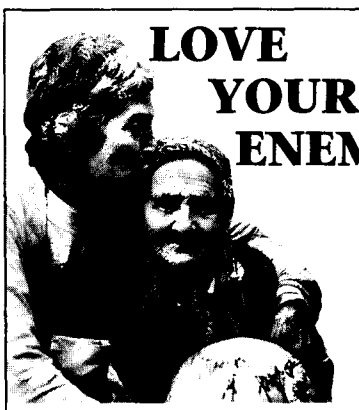

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What Hutchins realized but Telander apparently still does not is that intercollegiate football, whether small- or big-time, is by its nature entertainment. As such it has no proper place in a university. To succeed at intercollegiate football, Hutchins noted, it is inevitable that "one must cheat, and I won't cheat." What Hutchins realized and acted on is a simple truth generally ignored today: that scholarships should be for scholars, not athletes; that intercollegiate football and higher education are contradictory terms; and that the purpose of a university is the cultivation of intellect, not the provision of entertainment. □

HELPING THE CENTER TO HOLD

THE STRUGGLE FOR AMERICA'S SOUL
Robert Wuthnow
William B Eerdman's Publishing Company, $22.95, $14.95 paper, 189 pp.

Frances FitzGerald

A professor of sociology at Princeton University, Robert Wuthnow is responsible for the first major remapping of the American religious landscape since Will Herberg's *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*. In *The Restructuring of American Religion*, published by Princeton in 1988, Wuthnow showed how since World War II the pattern shifted, and a world that had been divided along denominational lines became one polarized between liberals and conservatives and organized to a great degree around special purpose groups—political, cultural, and devotional. Marshaling and synthesizing huge quantities of data, Wuthnow described this shift within the context of such important external developments as the growth of higher education and the expansion of the welfare state. It is a major piece of empirical sociology.

Wuthnow's new book, *The Struggle for America's Soul*, is a more personal and more interpretive work based on his earlier researches. In it Wuthnow speaks not just as a sociologist but as a committed Christian—a Presbyterian and a theological liberal—concerned with the deep divide between mainline and evangelical Protestants. As his choice of publisher indicates, he is here addressing himself principally to liberal evangelicals in the hopes that they will assist in creating some common ground between the warring camps. Secular readers will therefore find this a somewhat puzzling book.

Wuthnow begins by defining the social location of American churches, classing them, as de Tocqueville did, among the voluntary organizations which support American democracy, and as Jurgen Habermas does, as a part of the public sector that stands between private enterprise and the bureaucratic welfare state. He then sketches out how the liberal-conservative polarization occurred and describes how it rent the Presbyterian congregation he himself belonged to in New Jersey. He goes on to explore the damage that has been done by the realignment and to assess the changes wrought by the growth of the state, the emergence of religious television, and the expansion of science—including social science. He concludes with an exhortation to liberal evangelicals, and in particular to liberal evangelical sociologists, to help in the building of a religious center that will hold against the polarizing forces of the extreme right and the extreme left.

Much of *The Restructuring of American Religion* is virtually unarguable—Wuthnow has more data than anyone else, and he handles it impeccably. But there is plenty to argue about in this book. Wuthnow's view is that qualitative damage has been done to religious and civic life in this country both by secularization—in the form of the growth of the state and of

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higher education—and by the "religious populism" of the televangelists. Wuthnow is perfectly entitled to this view, and he may be right. The problem is that he attempts to prove these theses empirically. It cannot be done. He proposes, for example, that the expansion of the state has caused the decline in church membership and therefore in civic involvement generally. In support of these two propositions he offers an array of data about social spending and church membership and the civic involvement of church members. But none of this data establishes causality as there are simply too many other possible causes for the decline of church membership during the 1960s, and civic involvement is just too vague a concept to be measured, much less measured against some other variable.

Elsewhere in the book Wuthnow simply transmutes arguments into explanations. In his discussion of religion and science, for example, he proposes that the fact that few scientists—and even fewer social scientists—go to church can be explained by the fact that scientists need to create a boundary to protect the slippery paradigms and ill-defined "realities" of their own discipline. As an argument this is not wholly implausible as science (and, goodness knows, social science) is a socially constructed endeavor. All the same, there are other possibilities, including the far simpler one that scientists, like most people, are not capable of pursuing more than one form of quest for truth at a time. Wuthnow's argument is thus simply an hypothesis, and not the explanation he would like it to be.

To judge by the quotes from distinguished evangelical scholars on the back of this book, Wuthnow has succeeded in crossing the mainline-evangelical divide and establishing the dialogue he aimed for. But he has done so by breaking some of his own rules and confusing what he believes with what can be demonstrated empirically. This is particularly unsettling given his choice of interlocutor. And it is unnecessary, for Wuthnow's arguments are interesting in and of themselves. Wuthnow is a sophisticated observer of the American scene, and one who is not afraid to ask the hard questions. He is also so lucid a writer that he never really confuses the reader; his leaps to faith are clear enough for all to see. □

REVIEWERS

CHARLES L. GLENN *has been responsible for civil rights and urban education for the Massachusetts Department of Education since 1970. His most recent book is* Choice of Schools in Six Nations *(U.S. Department of Education).*

TOM O'BRIEN, *a member of the Society for Values in Higher Education, chairs the humanities department at Manhattan School of Music.*

JAMES P. DEGNAN *is professor of English at Santa Clara University. His work has appeared in several publications including the* Atlantic, Harper's, Esquire, *the* Hudson Review, *and the* Sewanee Review.

FRANCES FITZGERALD *is a frequent contributor to the* New Yorker *magazine and the author of several books including* America Revised *(Atlantic Monthly).*

SAUL MALOFF, *a novelist and critic, has just completed a memoir entitled* My Secret Life: An Open Letter to the Late J. Edgar Hoover.

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FIDEL, PINOCHET & THE PEN

SELF-PORTRAIT OF THE OTHER
Herberto Padilla
Farrar Strauss Giroux, $19.95, 247 pp.

MY HOUSE IS ON FIRE
Ariel Dorfman
Viking, $17.95, 167 pp.

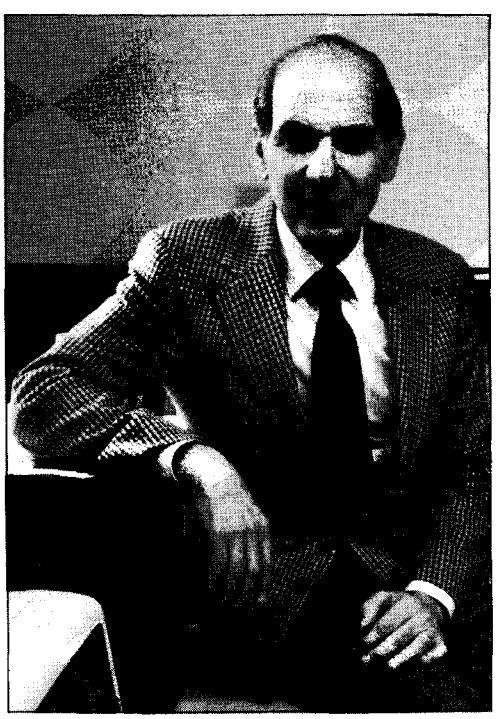
Saul Maloff

In a concluding scene of the saga of Heberto Padilla's life from the rhapsodic beginnings of the Castro years to the bitter, exhausted, maimed end in 1980, Fidel summons the poet to his palatial office and tells him very well, then, if he wants so desperately to betray his native land by leaving it for the gringo cesspool, he is free to go. The two men had known each other since their student days. For ten years prior to this final meeting, the poet had been under close scrutiny by state security, by camera, tape, direct surveillance, under virtual house arrest.

Early in that wretched decade, for no particular reason, he had been arrested, imprisoned, and hospitalized for thirty-seven days. Interrogated, though about what we do not know—sufficient that he should be known as an opponent of the regime and subjected to treatment for which our century is justly celebrated—he was beaten, scorched, drugged, treated for his wounds, and in due course released. Later, along with other writers whose ideas and work displeased the supreme leaders, Padilla was broken on that cruelest wheel, the public confession of "error," the "classic rite," as Padilla calls it, of self-degradation.

The "rite" had attained this status during the great purges in the USSR in the 1930s when deviant intellectuals cleansed themselves of their heinous responsibility for the Peloponnesian War and leprosy on their way to the firing squad. Padilla's crime: He had ceased to be a believer in the redemptive powers of the revolution—the revolution he had once seen as a vessel of infinite promise. But his ordeal, after all, was neither the gulag nor death. Gravely wounded he was; but "wounded," as his friend Yevtushenko wrote him consolingly, "isn't dead...and I want to hear again the clang of horseshoes coming from the horses of your poetry." The Russian poet, Padilla's longtime friend both in Cuba and in the USSR where he had been based as a journalist, knew something about purges and the gulag and poets condemned to silence.

The Havana Padilla returned to from his sojourns in the Soviet Union and Europe was "oppressed by caution and fear." The Writers' Union had been densely infiltrated



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by state security; decadent Europe had infected visiting Cubans with a corrupting taste for the *dolce vita*; and homosexual members of the union were to be cured of their accursed affliction by the principles of Pavlovian psychology in the concentration camps of Camaguay. Even theology had been mustered in the war against those who had deviated from the one true cosmology. Ché himself had said that "all writers are in a state of Original Sin." And at the time of the Soviet tempest boiling around Solzhenitsyn's revelations, none other than Raúl Castro had spoken in Prague to the diplomatic and commercial mission to which Padilla was attached. "In Cuba, fortunately," Raúl had said in his laughing, lighthearted way, "there are very few intellectuals, and those there are do nothing but get bogged down reinventing the wheel." In this miasmic atmosphere, Padilla had abjectly confessed that he had indeed written those verses, that novel, those translations. He was "ostracized" and reduced to the status of "marginal person."

The tale is tragically familiar: by the sixties such tales were old hat. Anyone who had been burned, in spirit or flesh, by the Stalinist perversion of utopian hope, might have cautioned Padilla, provided him with maps of the territory he was certain to traverse on the way to becoming yet another case history in a failed revolution that by the nature of the beast will sooner or later devour its own children.

Do not search *Self-Portrait of the Other* for anything remotely approaching a systematic account of the poet's relations with the Cuban revolution, though they compose a loose narrative thread. Otherwise, here is Padilla recalling what can never be forgotten. Moments and portraits: Shostakovitch weeping upon being notified by the Soviet commissars of culture that his new symphony will not be performed after all; the poet José Lezama Lima discoursing on literature; Padilla arguing politics and art with García Márquez, Alejo Carpentier, and others; detailed sketches of writers in Cuba and elsewhere who were the important friends (and antagonists) of those triumphant and ruinous years.

Ariel Dorfman is another displaced person, a Chilean citizen living in exile in the U.S. since 1973. The stories in this resonantly titled collection are less fictional than they are extended cries of pain at the desolate spectacle of ashes that were once luminous landscape: Allende's Chile after Pinochet. Torture, anguish, devastating poverty, widespread unemployment, illiteracy—above all, a hollow hopelessness. Here is a desert land populated by collaborators, loyal servants of the regime, torturers, and their victims, while the ladies of the great houses, having composed menus for the staff, serve afternoon tea. In "Godfather," an illiterate woman, acting for her missing husband, seeks to register her newborn son by the name of Luis Emilio and is told by the weary clerk that she cannot do so as her other son already bears that name. The epigraph to this story cites a hope-filled 1917 address by Luis Emilio Recabarren, the founder of the Chilean Communist party, and Salvador Allende's last words to the Chilean people in 1973: "These words are, above all, for the poor women of this land." Extended to include all Chilean people, those words might serve as an epigraph for the whole collection. □

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 234)

Nasiliu), is the equivalent Slovak organization, headquartered in Bratislava.

MICHAEL NOVAK

The author replies:

I'm not surprised that Professor Gans, the author of *Middle American Individualism*, disagrees with my criticism of extant social democracy. For Gans, middle-class "avoidance of politics" is inevitable, indeed characterological, and the best we can do to reform welfare-state democracy is tinker around its edges via such mechanisms as the extension of polling and government delivery of services in a "user-friendly" fashion. Gans fails to see that the consumers of welfare-state benefits—a group that includes all Americans of every class—are not necessarily good neighbors, much less good citizens. In politics and economics, consumerism maximizes demand and minimizes participation; it induces political passivity and distributional conflict. One need only look at the warfare between generations resulting from the Social Security mess to see that the welfare state as now administered creates what Alan Wolfe has called a "moral hole."

Perhaps consumerism sufficed in the affluent and (economically and culturally) stable 1950s and the early 1960s; it will not do in the uncertain 1990s. We need much more civic cooperation and social interaction to deal with a postindustrial global economy, new technologies, and transformed sensibilities, as well as with old problems like poverty and racism.

Professor Gans misreads me if he thinks that I want to destroy social democracy and the welfare state, or that I don't know the corrosive effects of poverty. But poverty is not the *only* agent of individual and social dysfunction. The gist of my article was to rejoice at the potential triumph of social democracy while trying to imagine and promote its reform "from the bottom up"—i.e., through locally created, democratically inclusive institutions that will build an agenda for common public work

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and a public sphere for critical discourse and debate.

Pace Mr. Orloski, I am no more inclined to romanticize small towns than to celebrate Professor Gans's "dark satanic mills." I don't know much about Taylor, Pennsylvania, but I have been in places in southern Arkansas which seem like outposts of the third world—colonial towns ruled by absentee timber or oil barons. But we also have communities like Pittsburgh, where not simply urban but *civic* revitalization is a fact of life. In Pittsburgh, politicians, neighborhood activists, and people from business and the academy have come together not once but three times since World War II to rebuild the city's economy through communitarian means. The federal government has not done much to encourage that kind of enterprise; instead, it has continued to increase its own regulatory powers and made itself an overburdened arena for struggles between special interests. What Pittsburgh has done exemplifies what I mean by reform of social democracy.

As for Mr. Novak, I am inclined to reach out my hand, smile, and, in imitation of Joan Rivers, ask, "Can we talk?" The problem is I'm not really sure we can. Novak wants to downplay the differences between social democrats and neoconservative liberal capitalists; and of course I agree with him that we must transcend the usual dialogue of the deaf which now characterizes American political discourse. At the same time, large differences remain, some of which his letter reveals.

First, his emphasis on freedom and invention refers to the liberal notions of negative liberty and entrepreneurial opportunity. For most liberal capitalists this is the whole definition of freedom, whereas for social democrats it is just the first element. A full definition would include equal access to certain goods, such as education and property, and positive freedom for self-development, which implies participation in decision making in the workplace, the neighborhood, the school, and the city. Positive freedom for self-development does not yield what Novak applauds—the supposedly "disciplined" welfare state of Reagan or Thatcher—but rather an expanded, indeed universal social support system whose benefits are delivered not as at pre-

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sent, but rather via local institutions emphasizing democratic social interaction. One must also ask: Who is to be disciplined? Certainly not the Boeskys and Milkens, who are given carte blanche to be as greedy as they like. Discipline falls rather on the poor; their "safety net" does not preclude the creation of a shamefully swollen homeless population.

Upon reflection it occurs to me that, despite appearances to the contrary, Gans and Novak have more in common with each other than with me. I would describe myself as a revisionist social democrat who sees the dialectical contradictions of social democracy and wants to overcome them through a more perfect humanism. Gans and Novak are liberals who in their different ways are quite satisfied with things as they are—with the market (Novak) or with the state (Gans)—and who accept the spiritual emptiness at the heart of modern society. This is not my view, nor, though I cannot speak for him, does it seem possible that it is Vaclav Havel's.

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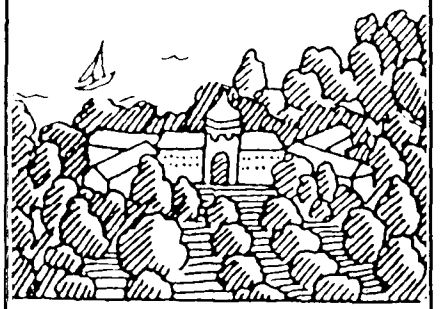

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